Modern Fishers of Men

By George Lansing Raymond

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MODERN

FISHERS OF MEN

AMONG

THE VARIOUS SETS, SECTS,
AND SEXES OF CHARTVILLE
CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

BY

GEORGE LANSING RAYMOND

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MODERN FISHERS OF MEN.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION: BAIT PROVIDED, AND A FEW FIRST BITES.

"HERE's a telegram for you, sir," said a small boy.

The person addressed—a slender, intellectual-looking young man, with a pale face, the beginnings of some side-whiskers, full lips, and small bright eyes—signed his name in the messenger's book, tore open the envelope, and read:

"Expect me to-night at eight, and don't go off larking.

WILL LORING."

The reader's face brightened. "Aha!" he said to himself; "so the captain's home again, is he? and is coming over here. Well, he may call it larking or not,

as he chooses. At any rate, he'll be on hand just in time for—"

At this moment a large family carriage, drawn by a span of spirited white horses, drove up toward the lecture-room of Chartville church, within the doorway of which the young man had been standing. As he heard the sound of the wheels, and glanced up, a slight flush gathered upon his countenance. "There comes Martha Beaufort," he thought.

But he had been mistaken. All the same, however, when, through the open window of the carriage, he caught sight of its chief occupant, his form, that had waited for a moment in that erect position to which he was often wont to refer as a strong argument against Darwinism, began a series of movements in which the head swayed backward and forward or upward and downward, according to one's point of view, with a somewhat astonishing display of agility. It was this peculiar movement, witnessed on occasions preceding the present, that had caused the boys of the town to give to the Rev. H. Dickory Thompson, to whom the form belonged (his mother had been a Dickory), the nickname of Hickory. One characteristic, however, does not make a character.

This young pastor probably had not yet reached the age when one cares to analyze his own actions in order to detect their motives. But, if he had done so, he could

have found, undoubtedly, ample reasons to justify his course. The quicksand does not hold one to itself less firmly, he might have said, because at first it seems to be so yielding. By-and-by these boys of Chartville may discover that, if hickory can bend, it can also form the bow or beau whose aim can make another bend.

Of this analysis of motives, however, there is no need that we should accuse the Rev. H. Dickory Thompson; nor even of saying to himself, what the Smith boys said of him to their mother, that "he knew who the good angels of his church were; why should he not bow before them?" Let us consider it purely the overflow of good nature, intent to secure through it and by it the good of his church and the community, that swayed the frame of this gentleman backward and forward as he came rapidly down the steps in order to help from her carriage that occupant of it of whom he had caught a glimpse through its window.

"Good-afternoon, Mrs. Beaufort," he said. "I'm glad you have come so early—but where are the children?" he added, as he looked toward the seats on each side of her.

"Why," said the lady, who was a well-formed, well-preserved, matronly-looking person, with unusually regular features, and a complexion altogether too fresh to be hidden away so largely under the front locks of her hair,

that, like two black window-curtains, were festooned down across her forehead, just touching her eyebrows and covering half her cheeks—"why," she answered, with a slight laugh, "we thought our ark for once could navigate without them; besides, the other creatures would have crowded them, you see."

They would, in fact, thought Thompson, as he looked about upon the seats; and still more did the impression grow upon him as he joined the lady and her coachman in their efforts to remove the contents of the carriage to the tables waiting for them in the lecture-room. Out came first a huge turkey, almost as big as Mamie Beaufort herself, and certainly decked out with as many ribbons. Then there was a lobster-salad that looked like a small flower-garden, and a whole wedding outfit of bouquets covering the front seat. Besides these there were bushels—as it seemed to the young pastor—of sandwiches and cakes of every description.

"Well," he exclaimed, after they had ended their journeyings up and down the steps, "you certainly have done your share in what you have brought."

"And I rather think," she said, "that my big family, when they get here, will do their share in disposing of what others bring. But, as I tell my girls, Mr. Thompson, it's all for your sake—the whole of it. We're very anxious, all of us, to have you succeed here, you know."

It was not an extraordinary circumstance, certainly, that a lady-parishioner should have based her efforts in behalf of a church-festival on the ground of her personal interest in her pastor; but, for some reason or other, this speech, coming from Mrs. Beaufort, had anything but an ordinary effect on the particular young pastor to whom it was addressed. His whole countenance began to betray a very unusual degree of agitation, and all at once his mouth began to extend from side to side so widely that, if he had really been a bow, to which a moment ago I compared him, no one could have watched that bow without solicitude—without much serious apprehension that, when bent backward the next time, the upper and more important end would be split off finally and fatally from all the rest. Though wherefore should he not have shown this agitation? He was himself exceedingly young, just starting out in life. Mrs. Beaufort, who had told him that she thought so much of him, was a very wealthy widow, the foremost lady in his church, the most influential person in the neighborhood; and Mrs. Beaufort had, besides, at least one very charming daughter.

Then, too, this youthful pastor had to-night an anxious heart on account of his solicitude for the success of this church-festival. It was his first experience with an entertainment of the sort. He had found his congregation, when, a few months since, he had come here to

take charge of it, in equal need of money and—in this suburban town, made up of city people and of country people both—of getting acquainted with one another. Therefore, he had planned this evening's gathering. But now that the hour drew near in which to find out what would be the result of it, there was present to his consciousness a vague and sickening feeling, similar to what a boy has when, for the first time, he has ended loading up a gun, and is about to fire it off. He is not entirely certain whether the gun will hit its aim, kick back at himself, or end in a general explosion; though, whatever is to be the upshot, he has braced himself for the attempt, and is relieved to think that the time has come to give the experiment vent. Mrs. Beaufort's words, so far as one could judge from them, were an indication that the experiment about to be tried this evening was to pass off smoothly.

In an hour or two, the lecture-room was beginning to be filled with representatives of other families who had brought their contributions, and had placed them on the tables. Behind these stood a row of the younger ladies of the congregation, most of them dressed in white, their cheeks blooming in fair rivalry of the flowers that they wore, and beginning to flush more deeply, now and then, as they turned to welcome the expected strangers who were to be their patrons. In a small room adjoining,

used as a kitchen, were their mothers, cutting up cake, and preparing sandwiches, oysters, tea, and coffee.

"There," said Mrs. Goosnek, a tall woman with a small head, a long nose, and shoulders that looked as though they had become totally worn out trying to keep a generation of dresses from slipping down her back—"there," she said, as she placed a large coffee-pot on the stove, "there's some coffee for you. Do you know, Mr. Thompson says he never tastes such coffee as mine is, and he don't find such ham as we cure, anywhere?"

This was said somewhat exultantly, and with a somewhat triumphant glance given in the direction of Mrs. Lathrop, who stood near her. It was with Mrs. Lathrop that the pastor, Mr. Thompson, boarded. Mrs. Goosnek was evidently one of those persons who believe in the necessity of cultivating Christian humility—in others.

As for Mrs. Lathrop, she made no reply, just then. She was a discreet woman, and knew that Mrs. Goosnek's words, uttered in the presence of a dozen or more women of the parish, the hospitalities of whose tables the Rev. Mr. Thompson had enjoyed, would do enough harm without any further contributions from herself. But it was not in human nature for her to keep from saying, when, after a little, Mrs. Goosnek had gone into the other room, that there were just two things that the Rev. Mr. Thompson never touched when he was at

home; one was coffee—he always drank tea; and the other was pork, in any form. He said he couldn't digest it.

"Humph," said little old, dried-up Miss Sniffins, with a head that tossed back, as she did so, like the patent-spring lid of a snuff-box about to be delivered of its sneeze-provoking contents, "I guess he's more afraid of trichina!"

But whatever may have been the reason of the pastor's aversion, in a community where all the farmers raised pork, and mainly lived on it, his opposition to the staple commodity, so soon as it became known, was destined to cause no little commotion. In fact, for a while it seemed as though his ban against it was about to cause as rapid a desertion of himself on the part of the evil spirits in his neighborhood possessed of pork, as the pork possessed of evil spirits did in the days of the Minister of Galilee. At one time it was confidently expected by the members of the rival sect in Chartville that it would be the cause of a large accession to their own communion. "No wonder they're all sick of him, he's such a wretchedly fussy fellow," said little Mozart Fidgeton ("the boys" all called him Mose, and said his name was Moses) who played the organ in "the other" church.

"The next time the man comes here, Matilda," said Farmer Gobblupp to his wife, waving his fork above the

onions, like a vulture about to pounce down upon its prey—"the next time the man comes here, Matilda, see to it we have fresh roast-pork. We'll teach him! we'll teach him!"

"But, my dear," expostulated his wife, "that would hardly be the thing. I really think, perhaps, he really wouldn't like it, you know."

"And what if he wouldn't?" said the farmer. "Do you suppose that I'm going to do what he likes?—going to submit to priestcraft like that?—like a woman? He's none too good to eat what other folks eat."

Whether, theoretically, Mrs. Gobblupp agreed with a statement on the part of her partner so orthodox and distinctively Protestant as this, I do not know. But, practically, she had not a little worldly pride, and had her own ideas about the kind of hospitality that ought to be furnished at her own table—especially to a guest who paid as many visits as the Rev. Mr. Thompson. Accordingly, the next time that he came to dine with her, although she did not dare to go directly against the will of her lawful lord, expressed so emphatically, with his fork in his hand, and that too held in ominous suspense above the onions, she managed by a little womanly tact—by an arrangement made ostensibly to prevent a lack of variety—to save both her own credit and the pastor's conscience. For he, according to his own confession,

had been tempted, more than once on a similar occasion, to indulge both in skepticism and in plagiarism, and to repeat a grace of which he had heard: "O Lord, if thou canst bless under the Gospel what thou didst curse under the Law, enable us to receive benefit from this, as well as from all other dispensations of thy Providence."

However, all this happened later. At present, my readers must turn from the savory suggestions of roast-pork, in order to snuff the steaming dishes and quaff the refreshing drinks of the Chartville church-festival, and this we can do, too, without having to pay our one dollar for our "admittance-fee, supper included." It is well enough for cynics to flout such entertainments, after all is over, after everything is cold, and has been digested. But how about it when everything is hot and fragrant? Aha, Mr. Gobblupp and Mr. Goosnek, how about it then? Didn't it seem savory? Didn't you have a little charity for Esau? And then the way, too, in which the whole thing was laid out! All those clean, white table-cloths, and the cakes and candies and salads and flowers, and the bright pretty girls bowing and blushing behind them! Didn't you almost wish Chartville were in Turkey, so that, without sin, you could look forward to a paradise something like that? Whatever you may have thought, I know that so much sweetness and beauty were not lost on the Chartville community in general. They flocked

about those tables just like so many bees about flower-beds; and they buzzed a good deal louder, and they—I was going to say, stung—but we must not anticipate.

Just as Deacon Fleischbottom—a short, thick-set man, with a chin protruding from his face like a cow-catcher from a locomotive, but with a large under lip rolling down over it that looked a good deal more threatening for anything in the shape of beef that might come in its way than ever did its iron image—just as this man, with some turkey, and lobster-salad, and fried oysters, and chicken-salad, and tongue-sandwiches, on a plate in his hand, and some ice-cream, and whipped cream, and water-ice, and wine-jelly, and méringues, and Washington cake, and jelly-cake, and fruit-cake, on a plate that he was guarding carefully on the bench beside him, was explaining to Mrs. Beaufort—it was one evidence of the calibre of his mind that he supposed the fact needed an explanation—why he came to entertainments of this sort—not because he found anything in them "for a man like himself to enjoy," but because he considered it to be his "conscientious duty to help sustain any and every effort put forth in order to secure a healthful spiritual life in the community"—the buzzing of the people nearest the door ceased for a moment, as they caught sight of one who had just entered it, and was evidently a complete stranger to most of those present.

Is this to be our hero? Oh, ye who have found the Rev. H. Dickory Thompson (whose mother had been a Dickory), with all his marks of good breeding and his deferential bearing, only a very commonplace sort of a commonplace clergyman, would you not like to have me introduce to your notice now a form decked out with the plumes and spurs fitted to command, even though they might not—as some of you younger ladies might desire—engage your attentions? Well, I will try to do it.

Behold then a young man of medium size, straight and not too broad, with a florid complexion, an abundant quantity of brown hair, a full soft beard, and mustache of the same color, and remarkably genial-looking eyes and mouth, when, as at the present moment, he is smiling. He wears no plumes nor spurs; but if a civilian will be satisfied with a military man who is lacking these appendages, everything else will appear as it should. He is dressed in the uniform of a captain; for he has just returned from the civil war, which, fortunately for the girls whose experience with him we are about to relate, has just been brought to a close.

"Who is he?" passes around the room like the escaping breath of one common aspiration.

But, a moment later, some of the mothers glance a little nervously in the direction of their daughters. They have heard his opening remark.

"Well, Dick, old boy, how are you? You seem to be having a rather rum time of it here!"—and this addressed to the Rev. H. Dickory Thompson!

"Hush, hush!" replied that gentleman in an undertone. "I'm mighty glad to see you, Will; but don't forget that I'm on exhibition here; and we can't let all the folks inside the green-room—I haven't time to stop and talk now. Let me give you an introduction to some of the girls."

"Ay, ay!" said Will, "a dozen introductions! That's just the sort of campaign I'm in for, at present."

But when the pastor turned to select the one to be indicated as, in his estimation, the most likely to prove entertaining, he was somewhat disconcerted. Throughout the length and breadth of all that room, it seemed to him as if there were not a single girl whose eyes were not now fixed upon him. Could he introduce his friend to one of them without incurring a risk of offending all the others? But just as his brow was beginning to redden with the blood that had rushed there to supply the demand that had been made upon his brain, in order to conceive of a mode of escape from this dilemma, Providence came to his rescue, Providence in the person of Deacon Fleischbottom.

It is well that this gentleman never had explained to him to what extent, on this occasion, he had proved to

be an instrumental agent in averting the discord threatening Chartville congregation. He had none too much humility before this; and the knowledge of what he had now done, fully realized, might have crushed out all the little of this grace that still remained in him. The way in which he saved Chartville, as, in old time, some god, by snatching the apple out of the hand of Paris, might have saved Troy, was in this wise: When, in common with the others, he had noticed that the talking in the room had suddenly ceased, and, looking up, had seen the glances of the girls all turned toward the door, which happened to be directly back of him, for once in his life he had allowed his curiosity to get the better of his prudence; for once in his life, in violation of a principle that he had always strenuously maintained, he had allowed the allurements of the external to cause him to forget those of the internal.

In the excitement of the moment, he had forgotten all about that plate of ice-cream, and whipped cream, and water-ice, and wine-jelly, and méringues, and Washington cake, and jelly-cake, and fruit-cake, so cozily placed at his side, and resting, alas, so treacherously! upon the dextral corner of his Sabbath-day coat-tail. In a briefer interval of time than it has taken to narrate the circumstance, he had gratified his own curiosity; but this only at the expense of rendering himself a new object of curiosity,

destined to introduce still further the element of variety into the otherwise monotonous drift of the evening's entertainment. With an ominous crash, Mrs. Goosnek's soup-plate, heaped so full of dainties, had been dashed upon the floor, and Mrs. Beaufort's new silk gown, just over it, could be likened to nothing but an after-dinner dish-cloth. That lady, moreover, in the repulsion of the shock, had flung herself backward, only to be aroused to the consciousness that she was resting in the arms of her pastor's military friend. Seeing her so situated, already on terms of such apparent intimacy, what was left for the pastor except to say, the while he was trying to preserve the proper equilibrium between a blush for her and a burst of laughter for himself, "Mrs. Beaufort, allow me to introduce my friend, Captain Loring?"

CHAPTER II.

SOME FISH, SEEMING TIRED OF BITING, ARE DRAWN IN BY A NET.

THE report of the catastrophe mentioned in the first chapter had soon brought a crowd of people about the chief sufferer. Among the first to arrive had been Mrs. Beaufort's two daughters, Bessie and Martha, anxious to do all in their power to wash their mother's skirts of any reflections that they otherwise might have continued to cast on the somewhat comprehensive scope of Deacon Fleischbottom's plans for the impletion of his inner man.

The mother, of course, introduced her daughters to the stranger. As she mentioned the name of Martha, unusually admiring glances were exchanged between this young lady and the captain. Upon seeing these, a nature less generous than that of the pastor—who, as has been intimated, was also wont to cast admiring glances in the direction of the same young lady—might have experienced a twinge of jealousy. As it was, he was not a woman—by which I mean, of course, that his sensibilities

were not very keen nor his insight very penetrating; and he was only conscious of a feeling of satisfaction that his two friends had become acquainted.

Martha Beaufort was a young lady in every way given to demonstrations. She was a person of strong prejudices, and, on certain occasions, evidently took delight in displaying them, not only in her words, but also through eccentric little adjustments of her forehead, eyes, lips, head, shoulders, and whole frame. At the same time, with those whom she liked, these traits were not disagreeable. They were interesting; they were charming. There was something so confiding in the spirit that she manifested when she told one how she hated other people, something so sympathetic in her bearing, that her presence seemed to act like sunshine on one's intellectual and spiritual energies. It was this, undoubtedly, that had made her so attractive to the pastor.

As for her personal appearance, it was just of a kind to set off well the traits that have been mentioned. She was of medium height, well-developed though only nineteen years of age, and of a blond complexion. Her features, while not sufficiently regular to answer all requirements of beauty, were, nevertheless, peculiarly fascinating because cast into shade by the peculiar brightness of her eyes. These might have been called blue, but there was in them, more than in any other eyes that I

ever saw, that constantly changing color and expression that seems to say, "I trust you—no, I don't," which, because it sets a man to thinking and keeps him at it, is more likely perhaps to awaken his interest in a woman than any other charm that she can possess.

As for the captain, his first thought on seeing her was, "I must have met this girl before—no; or, if I have, she's grown a good deal prettier. By Jove! but she's the prettiest thing I ever saw."

"You seem to be having an overflow of good things here to-night," he said.

"We are," she answered, laughing. "You came in, and it proved too much for us."

"The last straw, eh, to break the camel's back?"

"Now please," she said, with a little movement that an actress would have envied—she was bending her own back almost double trying to reach her mother's skirt—"you mustn't add an insult to the injury, you know."

"Let me atone for it by giving you some help, then," he answered; and he took the basin from her side, as if about to go and fetch more water. But of course, as he was a stranger, some one else had to go and do the business for him. He was not loath to be left there with the ladies; and, while he was left there, you may rest assured that he did not slight his opportunities. His eyes, as became one fresh from a school in which he had been

trained to watch the acts of those each side of him, were working vigorously. He had noticed soon the size of these young ladies' hands and arms, and how they used them; the backs of their heads, and how they had done up their hair, as well as many other little arrangements and adjustments, traits and graces, that can only be revealed when a woman is at work, and which, when they have been revealed to a bachelor, are apt to make him feel that he has been placed on a footing of especial intimacy with her.

And so when, at the end of her task, Martha Beaufort turned her eyes on him, and took his arm for a little promenade, it seemed to the captain that her face expressed—and he thought that it was very natural and appropriate that it should express—a feeling of intimacy precisely similar to that which he himself had experienced. But a moment later they had passed the pastor. "Dear me!" she cried, as she suddenly snatched her hand from his arm; "but I must go back there to my table. I had forgotten all about it."

The captain turned about, quite startled by her sudden exclamation, and now for the first time saw in her eyes the trustless look of which I have spoken. "Well," he thought to himself, "this creature has the power of flying about fifty thousand miles away from a man in a single second;" and he seriously had it in his mind to

hum, "Thou art so near and yet so far," but he did not do it. As we shall find, he reserved his musical propensities to be displayed at a later stage in the evening's entertainment.

He began to talk with Miss Bessie Beaufort, who happened at this moment to be standing near him. He found her very different from her sister. She was a quiet, self-contained, but withal a very cheerful-hearted brunette, a little over twenty years of age, with rich, dark, wavy hair, a face too finely grained perhaps to be what is termed striking, and earnest though not brilliant hazel eyes, which seemed—as the pastor always said, and the captain afterward agreed with him—to be perpetually looking out for something good to do, and for somebody good to do it with.

By this, however, is not meant, as some of my readers may infer, that she was looking out for some one who would marry her. It was understood by those who knew the family well that any obligation to posterity of this sort, that a woman possessed of traits like her own might have, was about to be fulfilled in her espousal to an earnest, enterprising gentleman, by the name of Gaspack, to make the acquaintance of whom, in a following chapter, is one of the pleasures held in reserve, as a reward for the person who will continue to persevere in his attempt to read through the present volume.

Miss Bessie smiled at Martha and the captain as her sister left him, as much as to say, "It's an old trick, captain; don't be frightened by it;" then she took his empty arm as he offered it, and marched him round and round the room; and, because she was a right good-natured person, or perhaps because she was herself engaged, she introduced him on the way, as if to console him for her sister's conduct, to almost every girl who was present.

What the captain said and did when introduced thus there is no necessity of my detailing. When a young man meets a young woman in critical moments such as these, the story of the two is always very similar. To some of these Chartville girls the captain merely bowed; some he complimented; with some he took a promenade; and with some he stopped to eat or drink. It was only toward the latter part of the evening that anything unusual happened. At that time a general feeling of depression seemed to have fallen on the gathering. Perhaps they all felt weighed down by the amount of material provided for the community in general, which each, like Deacon Fleischbottom, had felt it his individual duty to stow away in himself in particular. Whatever may have been the cause, it was noticed that, when the people had ceased eating and helping themselves at the tables, their mouths and limbs had ceased

moving altogether; when the dishes before them had been emptied, everything else seemed empty. Although everybody felt that it was not quite time to go home, or at least ought not to be, the wives began to suggest that their houses were empty, the husbands that their carriages were empty, the parents that their pockets were empty, and the children that their plates were empty. The girls, leaning against the wall in one part of the room, seemed to be giving most doleful intimations that their hearts were empty, and the boys, against the wall in another part of it, that their brains were empty. Of course one would scarcely have expected it to take a long time to exhaust these latter, but it was really sad, so early in the evening, to see so many human beings stalled against the walls like so many cattle. Alas! the people of Chartville, who had forgotten all their rivalries and class-distinctions when crowding together so eagerly to dispose of the dainties loaded upon those tables, were beginning to separate, each from each, with as much stiffness and as many struts as the rival peacocks and roosters after they have snatched up the crumbs that have fallen from a kitchen-window.

It was at this stage, disheartening in its forebodings of failure to all who cared to see the festival prove a success, that Will Loring, like another Marcus Curtius, leaped into the gap that separated the different elements of

Chartville society, and brought about a state in which there was no more emptiness. In order to do this, however, he did not give up his life, only his dignity. He first escorted Miss Martha Beaufort to the melodeon, and asked her to play for him a rousing war-chorus. Then he took a large bouquet, stuck it in his military cap, put the cap on his head, offered one of his arms to Bessie Beaufort, whose position was at one extreme of Chartville society, and the other to Susan Gobblupp, whose position was at the other extreme, and started off on a promenade around the room, calling upon all the boys to follow suit. At the same time he led off in the chorus that they heard played on the melodeon. Before long, a good many in the room had joined them. Then he stepped out of the ranks, and began giving them military orders, and marched them around and around and around, until everybody in the whole room had joined in the frolic. Even Deacon Fleischbottom had left his last dish of ice-cream, to trot along, like a representative of the ambulance department, in the rear.

Of course, this all seems very stupid to tell of; but if you had seen those young fellows, with all the bouquets, big and little, stripped from the tables, and stuck into their hats; if you had seen all the people shouldering canes, and brooms, and parasols, and umbrellas, like so many muskets; if you had caught sight of the girls

dancing along beside the men, and trailing their white robes after them, swept on like so many billows of sea-foam above each of which was springing a Venus; and, better than all, if you had listened to the laughter that made each chorus end with a shake a good deal more hearty than ever you heard at the opera, you too would have thought, as all of them did, that they were having the rarest sport of the whole season. Then, when they had tired of this, Will let them rest, while he mounted on one of the benches, and became an auctioneer; and such puns as he managed to bring in, while he was selling off the flowers and cakes and candies that were still left on the tables, I am sure one seldom hears inside the lecture-room of any church. Then, last of all, at the request, he said, of many friends, he turned to present to the pastor the last large frosted cake that had not been cut; and all through his address, which was just as good as though it had been written out and learned, he, every now and then, would allude in feeling tones to Mrs. Thompson and the children; and, as the pastor had no wife at all, nor, of course, any children, all the folks, especially the young ladies, thought the captain's was the funniest sort of speech conceivable. But even that was not a bit more funny than what the pastor did. For when he had got the cake, he just began and cut it up, "for all his numerous family," so he said. And then—

and it was noticed that he gave the largest pieces to the poorest people—he asked them all to help him eat it, telling them, if they could not eat it there, to take it home with them, "for you," said he, "are all my family. Yes, yes, friends, let us always think and pray and act as though we were in fact one family, all children of one loving Father in the heavens." At this, a few, and most of them the very ones who had been the merriest just before, began to wipe their eyes, though it was not from sadness. Then the pastor made a little prayer, and all united with him while he sang—

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow."

Then everybody, yes, I verily believe that everybody who was there turned round, and was shaking hands with every other person who was present; and there were some there who had seen each other in the church on almost every Sunday of their lives, and yet had never shaken hands before. And so the company parted; and, for half an hour, right merrily the voices from the carriages and wagons, as they drove off, could be heard ringing faintly out from the hills and valleys under the bright moonlight. There was not one going home, I am confident, but felt that there had never been an evening like this spent before in Chartville church. Nor do I

think that one of all the girls who had been present even thought that it would be possible to spend another such as this, unless, in some way, some one like this Captain Loring should be with them.

CHAPTER III.

CERTAIN INFERENCES DRAWN FROM THE FOREGOING EXPERIENCES.

"And we owe all this to you," said the pastor, as he stood with his friend in the moonlight, listening to the voices from the distant wagons.

"Owe it all to me?" asked the captain, to whom he had spoken. "How so?"

"How so?" repeated his friend—"why, because you knew enough to get up that ridiculous march and auction, just as the chill was coming over the crowd, and stiffening everybody, and preparing us to break up, more than anything else, like a set of icicles."

"Were things getting to be so bad as that?" said the captain. "To tell the truth, I didn't notice any particular chill or stiffness."

"Didn't notice it? I thought, of course, you did—that that was the very reason why you started up so suddenly, and put an end to it."

"Not at all."

"And you mean to tell me," said the pastor, "that those antics of yours were all spontaneous, unprovoked, as destitute of reason actually as they appeared to be on the surface? The army must have had a queer effect upon you. One often hears of war's turning human beings into brutes, but the brutes aren't usually apes and kittens, are they?"

"Why shouldn't a fellow have a good time?"

"A good time! Well, if that was your only motive, I shall simply write the whole tale out, put it in my *Index Rerum*, and head it, 'One more Instance of the Intervention of a Special Providence.' You stick to it, then? You're in earnest?—and you'd received no hint how necessary it all was?"

"No, none whatever, unless— Now, let me see—" and the captain paused. "Perhaps you could say it was Bessie Beaufort's. 'Twas she who asked me to sing an army-chorus—"

"Aha! aha! and was it she who started you off in the march, and hinted that you hook up Sallie Gobblupp with your empty arm?"

"Perhaps you're right," said the captain; "'twas a mighty small hint, but I couldn't swear to it that she didn't give it."

"Aha! aha! I thought—I thought—" said the pastor. "So, my brave commander, you have been outgeneraled

here already by a little Chartville woman. Never knew it, either! Aha! my boy, there's many a captain that can stand before a bayonet who can't withstand the flash of a woman's eye."

"Her eyes *are* mighty dangerous," said the captain —"aren't they? And then her sister Martha's—whew! they're enough to take a man right off his feet! And did you see their little sister Mamie's feet and underpinnings? By Jove! it was worth the whole show just to get a sight of them! What's the use, confound it! of all the grown ones' wearing those flapping, trailing dresses? One wouldn't know that they had any feet if he couldn't judge of them—as we have to do of all of them—by their younger sisters. In a perfect state now—"

"Well, well, but we're not in a perfect state, you know."

"I think I do—yes, yes," said the captain; "but that's no reason—is it?—for rendering half our race—and the prettier half, at that—but little better than deformed? I only meant to say that, with society in a perfect state, the dress would show off natural charms, you know, whatever they might be."

"Ah! yes, but, you see, the majority of mortals haven't natural charms; and, as the majority rule, of course they're bound to keep their neighbors covered up; so general ugliness shall lose as little as possible from contrast with exceptional beauty."

"Exceptional beauty! Humph! Don't lose your faith; hold on to a God of general goodness, and only issue bans, my pastor, against the exceptional ugliness of those who make the fashions. But how about these Beaufort girls? Do you know them well?"

"Yes—no—that is, I thought—I hoped I did, before this evening," said the pastor; and he told the captain briefly something that had happened in the lecture-room just after Mrs. Beaufort's arrival as described in our introductory chapter.

It was to this effect: Mrs. Beaufort, before she had arranged upon the tables the contents of her carriage, had looked up to him, and remarked, significantly, "Oh, by-the-way, Mr. Thompson, I came early, among other things, to get good places at the tables for Bessie and Martha.

The relevancy of this remark must be explained.

Almost all this day, ever since the men, before going to their work in the morning, had helped him place the tables where they were, the pastor had spent his time in counting over on his fingers the names of different young women in his church, and looking at the tables to decide just where he should station them,—a work that the ladies' committee, with somewhat doubtful propriety, had assigned to him. He had been ransacking his brain, too, in order to discover methods through which each particular

place might be made out to reveal its particularly desirable advantages—how, for instance, the place nearest the door could be made to appear satisfactory to the Gobblupp girls, whose nervous natures were always prompting them to desire to see everything the very first moment that it occurred, and then to take part in it—and how the place behind the stove could be made to appear equally satisfactory to the Goosneks, whose slender shoulders and elevated heads were always reminding them of the dangerous tendency of an undue exposure to currents of air, especially when coming from behind. These are only two instances out of fifty serving to evince the delicate nature of those diplomatic relations that the approach of the church-festival had caused suddenly to spring up between this very inexperienced pastor and the not altogether inexperienced ladies of his congregation.

In making his arrangements, it had happened that the pastor, unfortunately for him in his present encounter with Mrs. Beaufort, had made up his mind to assign two rather inferior places to these very daughters of hers about whose destined positions she was now manifesting her anxiety. They were generous-hearted, self-sacrificing, Christian women, and—what was more important in the present case—perfectly secure in their own social position, and certain to attract more attention than any

others in the room, no matter where they should be stationed. If given inferior places, they, as he had thought, would not have the same reasons that others might have for considering themselves to be slighted. Besides this, he had been confident that he knew enough of their modes of thinking to feel assured that they would appreciate what he had done, and why he had done it, as soon as he should tell them candidly his reasons.

So much for the daughters. But now, unexpectedly, he found himself called upon to deal, not with them, but with the mother; and this desire of hers, just expressed, to secure good places at the tables, had revealed a trait in her character upon which he had failed to calculate.

"I've been thinking of places for different persons," he said, as if to give himself time to consider just how he should answer her.

"And where were you going to put Bessie and Martha?" asked the mother.

As the pastor looked up, he noticed within hearing distance the sexton's wife, dusting off some benches. He recalled that, a short time before this, in a moment of unguarded confidence, he had satisfied what had then appeared to him to be the innocent curiosity of this woman, by giving her the very information now solicited by Mrs. Beaufort. He recalled, too, that he had taken no little pleasure in the gratification that this woman had seemed

to derive from the fact that daughters of one like herself, in low station, were to receive at his hands just as much consideration as those of the "first lady" in the parish. Evidently, in the presence of a woman who had manifested this gratification, no change of front, in view of the advance of Mrs. Beaufort upon the scene of action, was possible, even if his intuitions had been quick enough to perceive the expediency of such a course.

"I thought," he said, "that this would be a nice place for them, over here." He did not dare to tell the mother more than this. He did not dare to acknowledge to her even that the place was not nice.

"What—my daughters—over there—in the corner?" said Mrs. Beaufort; and she gave him a look that seemed to imply that, if that were the way in which her offspring were to be treated, she had made a great mistake in getting him called to her church, as well as in bringing so many contributions to its festival; and that he would make a great mistake if he were to suppose that she would ever do anything of the same sort for him in the future.

The admirer of her daughter saw that look, and so, to do him justice, did the pastor of her church; and, during his brief sojourn among this people, he had already become acquainted with one or two women in whom the powers of analysis had not been sufficiently

developed to enable them to separate a pastor from a church or a church from a pastor. He was prepared, therefore, to comprehend the situation at once, to see clearly the danger that threatened both himself and the flock over which he had charge. With this came also a dim conception that, by frankly explaining his real motives, he might ward the danger off; at least, that he might prepare himself, in a way that otherwise would be impossible, for unfolding by-and-by his real motives to the two young ladies, whose good opinions of himself he was anxious, for more reasons than one, to preserve. But, notwithstanding this suggestion of a method of retreat from his difficulty that would have saved his honor in the future, if it had not secured his success in the present, he had failed, as he told the captain, to avail himself of it. Why had he done so?

You and I, reader, do not understand a sensitive man if we always attribute his actions to motives that lie within the sphere, or are under the control, of intellect. I have seen a child stand mute before a teacher who was threatening him, and make no effort, apparently, to recite a lesson that he knew perfectly. It was simply a physical impossibility for the child to utter a syllable. So, now it had been simply a physical impossibility for this young pastor, a moment before—to his own conceptions—so full of diplomacy, to utter to Mrs. Beaufort one sylla-

ble of what he had previously rehearsed to himself as the language to be addressed to her daughters. In deciding upon this language, had he been presuming too much upon his intimacy with them, or upon his knowledge of their characters, or upon their sympathy with his own plans? Had he been too sure that they would share his desire to have individuals sacrifice themselves for the good of the community? On the whole, had it been an altogether safe thing for him to choose for these two the particular sphere in which they, and not himself, were to do the sacrificing? Was he afraid that Mrs. Beaufort would resent such a display on his part of knowledge of her daughters, or intimacy with them?—that she would dislike him for his presumption? The sequel must decide. At present, it only concerns us to know that he went on to make matters worse by saying:

"Really, Mrs. Beaufort, I am sorry you don't like the places."

"Of course I don't," said that lady; "who would?"

"But, Mrs. Beaufort, somebody must have them."

It was this last expression which, as he was now talking with the captain, he recalled, and which, he said, had given, as it seemed to him, very grave offense. It is true that, when he had recognized this fact, he had assigned the daughters other places. It is true that, for a time after he had done so (like a great many others who, when

they have put themselves to inconvenience for the sake of their neighbors, suppose that they have necessarily conciliated them), he had hoped, inasmuch as he had made everything wrong in his plans with reference to everybody else, that he had made everything right with reference to the Beauforts. But now that the excitement of the evening had passed by, especially as he recalled Mrs. Beaufort's manner when they had parted, he had again become solicitous.

Of course, the captain, like a man just home from the army, only laughed to hear this story, told his friend he had the blues—a mere reaction from the worry and excitement of the day—and recommended an extended nap next morning.

But, after all, the pastor knew a good deal more of women. He had reason to be frightened. To think that, in the sense in which he had used the word, he had termed the daughters of the wealthiest family in the church "somebody!" Would Mrs. Beaufort soon forget it? His premonitions told him "no." And if, within a week or two, he could have overheard the conversations in the Chartville parlors, something more substantial than his premonitions would have confirmed their testimony.

As a fact, Mrs. Beaufort never tired for weeks of letting her intimate friends and others know that, what-

ever they might think of the Rev. Mr. Thompson, she, at least, had known of instances in which he had proved himself to be inconsiderate, if not even ungentlemanly. And inasmuch as, during her many insinuations with reference to the subject, she never deigned to state the facts that had led to her conclusions, not a few with whom she talked became convinced that they must have been of a nature very serious indeed and probably shocking. In fact, O my malicious reader, whenever you wish to do a vast amount of backbiting, just remember that the suggestion of another's fault is to the statement of it very much what steam is to the water from which it is generated. In the vapory form, much noise is often made, and space filled up by that which really is no bigger than a single drop. Many of those who heard Mrs. Beaufort talk went away to shake their heads and speak in riddles just as she did; and as all of them were anxious to be thought to be on confidential terms with the foremost lady in the village, not a single one would intimate that she might not be able to tell all the facts about the case, if only she had not been constituted—well, too delicately, if you choose—to do so. Alas for the influence of Mrs. Beaufort! Alas for the influence of the Rev. H. Dickory Thompson! Alas for his little love affair in Mrs. Beaufort's family! Alas for the spiritual interests of his congregation, that were all dependent on the re-

spect that the community would continue to have for the judgment and the character of its young pastor!

With such interests at stake then, with such at stake in every village in our land, what is to be done when two such sensitive beings come together, intent to do the right, with no excuse for quarreling, and yet each so influenced by physical temperament that the one is kept from saying what he would like to say, and the other from understanding what she would like to understand? I do not know, until at last all such shall come to comprehend more thoroughly some simple facts concerning human nature; until they shall come to read, perhaps—a remark inserted solely for the benefit of my publishers—their share of tales portraying traits of human character, like those to be unfolded here. Till then, can we ever cease to have the gravest apprehensions that, though pastors may preach and people may pray, the malice in the pews will flow on forever?

CHAPTER IV.

AN EXCURSION TO A VERY PROMISING FISHING-GROUND, TOGETHER WITH SOME DISCUSSIONS ON METHODS OF FISHING IN GENERAL.

"WELL, all I have to say," said the captain, after his friend had ended the story of his troubles as related in the preceding chapter—"all I have to say is that that ladies' committee imposed on you. What business of yours was it to assign the places at the tables? If you keep on acting the part of a Paris here, giving decisions upon the relative charms of your female parishioners, why, they'll all have you by the hair in no time. You'll be bald, my boy, before your day."

"But, as I told Mrs. Beaufort, 'somebody' must do it; and I don't know but I'd rather do it myself than trust it to anybody else."

"Why must 'somebody' do it?" asked the captain.

"To prevent friction when the people come together."

"But, confound it! what's the use of their coming together at all?"

"What's the use?" said the pastor. "Now, don't ask that, Will, after your experience to-night. What's the use of bringing them together on Sunday? Isn't it something, don't you think, to make them keep step as you did in that march, and thus make their hearts keep time too?—and, because they have once experienced it, to make them believe in sympathy, and in a life controlled by the principle of sympathy? I tell you it'll be an inspiration to good to some of these people for a year, only to remember what happened because you and they came into contact, for a few moments to-night, with two such angels on the earth as those Beaufort girls."

"So, so, and I— Well, that's a new rôle, isn't it? There was an angel, then? It guided Captain Loring, and he marshaled Chartville congregation on to a place where they could revel in an experience—transient, to be sure—of heavenly bliss. It makes a poor man wish, confound it! that he hadn't enjoyed the sport so hugely. Then he could claim a little merit for his self-denial."

"Well, Will, but that's religion: to find your own enjoyment in making others happy—in the broadest sense, I mean."

"Now, Dick, hold on. You young men go too fast. The good old way, you know, was to find your cross in

making others crosser. But, to tell the truth, I rather like your view. It's enough to make one feel like coming here and joining your church himself."

"And, seriously, Will, why can't you come out here? There's nothing to prevent it, is there? You could go to the city every day, you know. There's another room, too, vacant now in the very house where I am stopping, and we could have the jolliest sort of bachelor life."

"By Jove! that is an idea," said the captain; "and then—there are the Beaufort girls."

"Yes, yes; and the Gobblupp, and the Goosnek—"

"Confound it all! why aren't you jealous of my charms? Aren't you afraid I'll carry off this Beaufort girl?"

"I?" said the pastor. "Humph! I ought to be afraid perhaps for your sake, for fear she'll carry you off; but, to tell the truth, I haven't any special interest in the one that seems to have begun that work with you to-night."

"What! Not in Bessie, eh? Well, then, perhaps in Martha? What?"

"Come, come, you're getting personal; and here's our house, and, long ago, we ought to have been in bed."

"I wish you luck, old boy," said the captain; "and, mind you, I'll stand by you now, whatever comes—whatever comes, old boy."

Did Will know how much he was promising?

On examining into the matter, the captain found that, so far as concerned his attendance on the law-lectures, which was to be his chief employment for the present, it would be fully as convenient for him to live in Chartville and visit the city every day as to live in the city itself; and, in other respects, he knew that, by doing so, he should be far more comfortably situated than if he were obliged to put up with the smells or the swells of a cheap metropolitan boarding-house. Besides this, he looked forward with no little pleasure to the prospect of renewing his friendship with his old college room-mate, Thompson; and at the church-festival he had had a glimpse of Chartville society sufficient to lead him to believe that there were other possibilities in store for him, of a nature far more delightful than any that a stranger would be apt to discover in a large city. So he decided, for the present, to accept the invitation of the pastor, and took up his residence with him.

It was not long before he had an opportunity of being placed on a footing of comparative intimacy with the Beaufort family. As he and the pastor were walking together one day, the Beaufort carriage overtook them. It stopped, and, after greetings had been exchanged, Mrs. Beaufort went on to say that Mr. Gaspack, a young man very deeply interested in church work and in all matters

of reform, as well as a very great favorite of her late husband's—a son of an old friend of his—was coming from a neighboring town to spend the evening with them, and "he has expressed a wish," she said to the pastor, "to make your acquaintance. We should be happy," she added, with a gracious smile to the captain, "to have both of you drop in upon us."

Of course, the two young gentlemen, like most young gentlemen solicited in such a way, were only too glad to accept the invitation.

"And now," said the pastor to his friend, as the carriage drove away from them—"now we shall have an opportunity of learning the truth about Bessie Beaufort's taste. This Gaspack is the fellow that's engaged to her."

"Aha!—so this is the man you were telling me of?" said the captain. "Good luck for both of us, then, that we can form his acquaintance—that is, if he's as fine a fellow as she is."

"I never have heard a word about him," said the pastor, "except from the Beauforts. They think he's a fine fellow, of course—that is, all of them except Martha perhaps, though I've no good reasons, either, for supposing that she doesn't like him, too."

"Well, well, we'll judge of him for ourselves," said the captain.

So that evening, after both the expectant visitors

had made themselves as immaculate, so far as concerned the outer man, as though they were about to take part in some old-time religious ceremony, they were duly ushered into the splendor of the Beaufort mansion.

As they were taking off their hats and overcoats in the hall, they heard the sounds of a gruff male voice, in which the nasal tones were exceedingly prominent, issuing from the adjacent parlor. At first they were apprehensive that they had arrived at the house sooner than they had been expected—that, in some way, their visit was untimely. They thought that some religious or reformatory meeting must be in session there—that some one must be delivering some sort of an exhortation, or, what, from the prevalence of the downward inflections, seemed more likely, administering to his audience some sort of a rebuke. All that they could make out of the general drift of the speech, however, was contained in expressions like these, somewhat too freely interspersed throughout it: "I assure you," "I told him," "I know," "I am certain," etc. As they moved toward the door, that stood partly ajar, they caught sight of the very red cheeks of a very full face, with very wide eyes and black side-whiskers, all of which moved up and down very emphatically, for the purpose, apparently, of keeping time to a very thick-set hand, that moved up and down pre-

cisely in the same way in front of a very thick-set body, that had probably experienced about thirty winters, in every one of which circumstances perhaps had rendered it necessary to consume a vast amount of easily-assimilated nutriment. In front of this body at least three female heads happened at this moment to be all bending slightly forward, as though in an act of reverence; and, besides this, to be all moving slightly, with precisely the same impetus, upward and downward at every nod of that fat face and stroke of that fat hand. One might have taken the whole party for a set of wax figures moved by mechanism.

"By Jove! did you ever see anything like that?" said the captain. "Isn't it the frog that 'would a-wooing go?' No wonder the fellow has taken in the women. His mouth looks big enough to take them in, and us too, and it has blow enough probably to make us as pliant to his breath as they are. I swear I never see such a swell but I feel that I'd be willing to give half my life to be allowed to prick and explode him. If it's Gaspack, Heaven defend us, and preserve poor Bessie! However, we must venture in."

The lady of the house came forward with her two daughters, smiling and gracious, to welcome them. After they had shaken hands, "Here," said Mrs. Beaufort, "is our friend, Mr. Gaspack. Captain Loring—Mr. Gas-

pack. And this, Mr. Gaspack, is our pastor, of whom you have heard us speak—Mr. Thompson. By-the-way, Mr. Thompson, I believe that you have never met Miss Inthway, a cousin of ours who is living with us now, a great admirer of yours, I assure you. Allow me to make you acquainted."

"I'm sure I'm very happy to meet Mr. Thompson," said that young lady, with a nervous toss of some exceedingly robust red ringlets, and twirling persistently a black cord that passed around her neck, and to the end of which dangled a gold pencil-case—"I'm sure I'm very glad to meet you, Mr. Thompson. I believe I've always been away from home or out of the room when you have been here before; and, come to think of it, just the last time you called I was up-stairs giving lessons to the little girls; and they were studying the catechism too, and there was a question too that I would have given worlds to have had you answer. I forget what it was now—oh no, I don't, either; I should have run down here just then if I had only known you were in the house—not now, Mr. Thompson—oh no, not now; not now, you know. Some time when we're alone—we'll discuss it then, perhaps."

"By Jove! a poor country cousin, who's serving here as the governess," thought Loring, "and making a dead set for the pastor!"

But if the captain had any curiosity at this moment to learn more about Miss Inthway from a personal conversation with her, it was impossible for him to gratify it. The loud tones of Mr. Gaspack, which seemed to grow louder and louder the longer any one remained indifferent to his eloquence, and to call upon each with an authority like that which rings from the bugle that sounds "Attention!" on a battle-field, were too overpowering to admit of much conversation that was not marshaled into the line of his leadership. Finally, however, Mr. Gaspack paused. But the reader must not suppose that it is meant to be insinuated by this remark that the zeal of the reformer had abated—not at all: the spirit was still willing, but the flesh was weak. Even Mr. Gaspack was sometimes short of breath. This time he had paused immediately after a sentence to this effect, in which he had summed up in what his friends would have called his usual masterly manner the substance of a harangue unusually vehement.

"And so I affirm," he had declared, "and I repeat the affirmation, that an individual, in the midst of his efforts to ameliorate the condition of mankind, is constantly pained by renewedly discovering that the natural mind neither opens to the appeals of truth, nor the carnal heart to the incitements of love."

After this very original and startling statement came

the usual obeisance, and the expected chorus of "No, oh no," from Mrs. Beaufort and Miss Inthway.

But Mr. Gaspack seemed to miss from this chorus the tones of one voice that should have blended with it. He gave a questioning glance—why not rather quote the language of his admirers, and say one of his commanding looks?—in the direction of Miss Bessie. The meekest of his underlings, thus called to the front, could not have ventured to dispute his right to know her thoughts. "That's very true," said Bessie, "only I was thinking that sometimes the mistake might be in ourselves. People don't always understand us, you know. And then, perhaps, one ought to change the form of her own appeal."

"She's hit the nail on the head now," thought the captain.

"'The carnal mind is enmity against God. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,'" said Mr. Gaspack, in his most impressive manner, and gazing around the room with very much the air of an Irishman who has placed a chip on his shoulder, and is waiting to see if any one will have the temerity to knock it off.

"Yes; but who is carnal and who is spiritual?" asked Bessie, in a half-meditative, half-inquiring way.

"'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits

that we are the sons of God.' Your pastor, surely," he went on to say, with a patronizing wave of the hand in the direction of Mr. Thompson—"your pastor surely has unfolded to your consideration the glorious doctrine of the assurance of hope."

To this the pastor ventured to suggest that his ministry had begun but recently in that neighborhood, and that, therefore, he had hardly had time to unfold every doctrine in its completeness. "Miss Bessie's idea," he added, "was probably something like that of St. Paul's when he said to the Corinthian Christians, 'Ye are carnal,' and again of himself, 'I am carnal;' as though he had thought there was a little of both the carnal and the spiritual man in all of us, though our general character undoubtedly was determined by the one of the two whose promptings we happened generally to obey."

"How can there be anything spiritual in the carnal man?" demanded Mr. Gaspack. "'The ploughing of the wicked is sin.'"

"And the eating of the worthy is righteousness," whispered Miss Martha to the captain, with a sly little shrug of the shoulders. The words and the whole manner were so confidential that they quite took his heart. "I always knew Dick had good taste," he thought to himself. "There's no nonsense about this girl. She understands that Gaspack, through and through."

"I presume it's so," said Bessie. "If they're very wicked, I don't suppose they'll be apt to plough very well. But it's always seemed to me that there's enough in people, if you can only get them to doing good once—get them interested in it—to cause most of them to come out in the end all right."

"In other words," said the pastor, "you believe that 'they that do his will shall know of the doctrine;' that is, you believe that one way—perhaps the best way—of learning about true doctrine is to have an experience of the results of it when applied to life; and, of course, experience, to be one's own, must be the result of one's own actions."

This expression was evidently about to call forth another of Mr. Gaspack's prolonged harangues, when, fortunately, some friend of his was announced, who had called to visit him; and the captain and the pastor had the satisfaction of seeing his words suddenly bottled up, and then transported impressively into an adjoining room, to be poured forth there for the exclusive benefit of the new-comer.

CHAPTER V.

SOME LINES THROWN OUT AND FISHING BEGUN, WITH A FAIR PROSPECT THAT THE SPORT WILL PROVE INTERESTING.

After Mr. Gaspack had retired, the captain turned for a time to devote himself to Miss Bessie. Not that he felt drawn toward her more than toward her sister Martha; only he happened at this moment to be sitting at her side. In fact, the commentary that, in his own mind, he was making on the conversation that had just occurred, and on the one that now was following it, was not in all its features complimentary. "She's unmistakably a blue-stocking," he was saying to himself, "and given to discussion; and something of a prude, too, or she wouldn't think so much of such a man as Gaspack. She's pretty, though, and it's a shame that she should throw herself away on him. And she's a shrewd one, too—a very shrewd one. He 'll not get the better of her often. That's a comfort, anyway." But very soon he had re-

solved to break away from her. He saw Miss Inthway near him. She was still absorbing in herself the whole attention of his friend, the pastor. This will never do, he thought; and he recalled that, in the goodness of his heart, before they had come there, he had volunteered his services, and had promised the pastor to do everything that could be done to insure the latter an opportunity of conversing with Miss Martha. So he made an effort, and afterward repeated efforts, to divert Miss Inthway from her prey. She shall not, so he thought, appropriate this poor man exclusively. But, somehow, all his efforts were no sooner made than thwarted—whether by the fascinations of Miss Martha, or by the planning of her mother, both of whom sat near him and were constantly engaging his attention, and so diverting it from Miss Inthway, he could not decide, till, later in the evening, just as Mr. Gaspack had returned to the room, an incident occurred that seemed to solve the question.

"Bessie was going to show you, Mr. Gaspack, our moonlight view of the river," Mrs. Beaufort said. "It's only a little way down through the meadow, and the girls have been thinking, all the afternoon, how much you would enjoy it."

"Now is my chance," thought the captain, as the two who had been addressed rose up to comply with the mother's suggestion. "Miss Inthway," he said—he was

sitting between her and Martha—"I think that I ought to have a view of this river, too."

"And I too," said the pastor, rising and looking toward Martha.

"Miss Inthway, dear," said Mrs. Beaufort, "I think it's getting a little chilly for me; won't you be so good, before you go, as to step to the nursery, and to bring me down my little plaid shawl?—Oh! come to think of it, Mr. Thompson, before I forget it, I want to say a word to you about something Deacon Fleischbottom told me the other day.—Why, Captain Loring, have we kept you waiting? Don't wait, I beg of you. Martha, I am sure, will be most happy to go on with you, and the others will follow presently."

"So, so," thought the captain to himself, as he gave his arm to Martha, "the old lady's at the bottom of it all. She must have found out, then, the pastor's liking for Miss Martha; and if anybody's to be mated here according to his own desires, he must begin by checkmating certain desires of someone else."

If Mrs. Beaufort had been able to read this thought in the captain's mind, and then been able to read his thought a moment later, it would not have caused her any very great uneasiness, even on the supposition that she was as deep a schemer as the captain had supposed. No one could talk with Captain Loring many minutes

without becoming convinced that he was a gentleman. And no one could come to reside in Chartville permanently, and be invited to the Beaufort mansion, before the inmates of it had asked a sufficient number of questions, and received a sufficient number of answers to become reasonably assured that there was no risk involved in forming the acquaintance. The intimacy with the pastor was a sufficient guarantee of the captain's moral character; and, as for other facts with reference to himself and his family, it is a question whether he would have been more indignant or amused could he have been made aware with what a degree of minuteness these were known already in the household that he was visiting. In Mrs. Beaufort's opinion, it was less objectionable for Martha to be thrown in the way of finding an admirer in the captain than in the pastor. Whatever had been her object, or whether or not she had had any secondary object in proposing that Mr. Gaspack and Bessie should go out to enjoy the view of the river by moonlight, it was evident that a moonlight stroll together on the part of the pastor and Miss Martha was not one of the anticipated results of her proposal.

This much seemed perfectly apparent to the captain. But he could scarcely think that the fact was owing solely to the slight offense that had been given to Mrs. Beaufort in connection with the places that had been

assigned to her daughters at the festival-tables. Manlike, it was impossible for him to conceive that this could have turned the tide of her feelings against the pastor even sufficiently to cause her to desire to have him recognize, if but for a single time, that she was not so greatly pleased to have him pay his attentions to her daughter as he, in his presumption, had supposed. Manlike, too, the captain therefore came to the conclusion that the whole affair was owing mainly to the favorable impression that he himself had made upon the family. And so his feelings were not altogether those of sorrow for the clergy, as, recognizing that he could not refuse to escort Miss Martha without appearing rude to her, and making a great deal more out of the affair than the circumstances warranted, he gave his arm to her, and the two passed out of the room together. And having once been fairly launched out into the moonlight under these conditions, it is hardly necessary for me to inform an intelligent reader that whatever scruples he may have had about pursuing this course very soon had vanished. When the mother of a pretty girl seems to discriminate between two men, and to confide her daughter to one of them rather than to the other, the one thus treated is simply not human if his vanity permit him to have any very serious doubt as to the wisdom or propriety of the mother's decision. And Martha was such a very pretty girl!

And she was always doing, so instinctively and naturally, just what would make a man discover in her something of especial interest to himself, personally. For instance, when he offered her his arm she did not take it as though she shrank from touching him, and would not do so at all, were it not a conventional thing that was expected of her; nor did she take it too eagerly, as if to suggest that she would like to press up a good deal closer, were that not an unconventional thing that was not expected of her. She did not refrain from leaning on his arm, as though to indicate that she felt abundantly able to take care of herself; nor did she lay hold of it as though she hoped that it might prove to be the last straw to save her from the overwhelming waves of spinsterdom. She simply used in good faith that which had been tendered her, and slipped her hand and arm within it, unconscious even that they almost touched his heart! And then she clasped her hands together, and leaned upon his arm so gently! He could not be otherwise than conscious all the time that she was there; and yet if she had been a disembodied spirit, hers could not have seemed a weight more easy to be borne. And when she told him how "very, very glad she was that he had come to live in Chartville, which had always been so stupid to her," and how "very, very much she hoped that he would come and see them often," and when, as she said this, her soft, sweet face, and eyes that

glistened in the moonlight, looked with such confiding glances toward his own, as if she knew that he believed and felt and thought precisely as she did herself, is it a wonder that the man forgot for a time that he was walking with the sweetheart of his friend? Not God alone, believe me, has love for those who put their trust in him. Every human being, in the degree in which he has the Godlike in him, has the same. This is the reason why the maids who cannot show that they have faith in their admirers, or the wives that they have faith in their husbands, or the mothers that they have faith in their sons, seldom keep the love of those in whom their affections really centre, or influence for good their actions. An independent, self-asserting woman will repel a man whom a clinging and confiding one, with half her intellectual power—ay, or physical beauty, either—will continue through long years to hold a captive. And so we see the reason also why a mother-in-law or a sister-in-law need not be mean intrinsically in order to destroy forever all one's possibilities of happiness in married life. She only needs to cast an occasional doubt upon the sacredness—not acquiescence—with which every wife that can be loved regards the suggestions of her husband. So, too, we see why a parent need not do a thing intrinsically wicked in order that her sons may grow to be intrinsically bad, at least so far as concerns their relations to her-

self. She only needs to believe with all her heart in the totalness of their depravity.

In early life two persons of the same sex often love each other passionately, with a love far greater than it is possible for either to experience in later life. But, when they reach maturity, the "struggle for existence" almost always forces such as these apart; if not so, into places where they grow to be suspicious of each other, if not acknowledged rivals. If, then, they wish to experience the love that springs from confidence, they must seek it in the other sex,—as least must do so now, and continue to do so, up to that expected time, so often prophesied, when both sexes shall have attained to manhood. Then, perhaps, that which remains of romance will be content to dream of the good times past, and to whistle, where no lips can pucker in response, some tune whose real refrain, if uttered, would be, "Good-by, Sweetheart."

Will Loring, as has been said before, had just come back from the war, from a life in which not only the army to be fought against, but the army to fight with, the emulations of fellow-officers above, about, and beneath one, cause the "struggle for existence" to be perhaps the hardest, the suspicions to be the best founded, and the rivalries the sharpest that can anywhere be experienced. No wonder, then, that, as he walked here, gazing down upon the face and eyes of this confiding creature at

his side, the sensations in his soul seemed new and strange to him, and all the more delightful from their sunny contrast with the smoky clouds of warfare from which he had just emerged. What cared he now, with such a being at his side, for that moonlight view of the river? He saw in the path before him the dim and disappearing forms of Mr. Gaspack and Miss Bessie. He saw, as well, a side-path, wandering from the straight one off beneath the limbs of full-grown beech-trees. He "always liked to walk in a path like that," he said; and then, as he thought of the sweet face at his side, as ever and anon it had turned up toward his own, he added, temptingly, "and to look up through the branches into the moonlight." He and his companion both agreed then that it would be "lovely, very lovely now," to turn aside and to walk beneath those trees. At last, as they lingered there, and were slowly sauntering to and fro, they heard and saw the pastor and Miss Inthway hastening rapidly, like two ill-mated colts, with no attempt to keep step, through the path that led to the view that they themselves had set out to obtain.

On seeing them, the captain called to mind the fact that he was quaffing—what intoxicating draughts!—from another's vintage. "We must hurry up," he said, "and find a short cut through the woods, and get to the place where we can see the view before they see it."

Martha scarcely seemed to think the case so urgent. She complied with his request with just the slightest hint of disappointment. It might mean nothing, to be sure; but yet it might mean everything. "Can it be possible," the captain thought, "that she can like me now, almost at first sight, as well as or better than she likes the pastor?" Whether it was the captain's wish to find out the true answer to this question, to act the part of a friend toward the pastor, or merely to gratify his own inherent love of flirting, that controlled his conduct during the rest of the evening, it would probably have puzzled him as much to determine as it can ourselves. All that we can know with certainty is that, from the time when he had met with the other couples who had gone to view the river, all through his walk back to the house with them, and through the hour that he and the pastor spent in the parlor after they had returned to the house, he devoted himself wellnigh exclusively to Miss Inthway. Mrs. Beaufort and Bessie seemed to be absorbed in the theological discussion that finally had waxed warm between Mr. Gaspack and the pastor. These ladies did not need his attention. But Martha sat at a distance from them silent and alone. He could scarcely have neglected her save as he did it, consciously and intentionally. Perhaps, then, he deserved the look and the tone that she gave him when, at the close of the call, she bade him

adieu. The look was a little less soft than usual, and the tone had just a little tendency toward what the elocutionist would term the circumflex, as she expressed a hope that he would not forget at once their walk together in the moonlight. The pastor noticed what she did and said, as well as the captain; and as the two men, who, when walking toward the house a couple of hours before, had kept up one continuous stream of conversation, turned their backs upon it, it was perhaps significant that, until they reached their rooms, they uttered scarcely a syllable.

CHAPTER VI.

A LITTLE QUIET FISHING, IN WHICH SOME FISH, GREAT AND SMALL, ARE CAUGHT.

"Good-morning, Captain Loring," said Miss Bessie Beaufort, about eight o'clock on the Sunday morning following the visit described in the last chapter.

"Good-morning, Miss Beaufort," replied the captain. "This is quite a surprise. I hadn't an idea of finding a soul I knew on the road at this time on Sunday morning. I thought I was entirely out of the fashion in getting through breakfast so early. It was such a glorious morning, though, I couldn't stay in."

"They're not all up at home yet, either," said Bessie; "but I had a little visit to make on the way to church, and so came on before them."

"But church doesn't begin till half-past ten, does it?"

"No, not the church. I ought to have said 'on the way to Sunday-school.'"

"Ah! yes, the Sunday-school. Is it a large one?" asked the captain.

"Not nearly so large as it ought to be," she answered. "You know, in a place like this it is hard to get teachers. But you'll see how it is. You're coming in to help us, of course?"

Now, if this question had been put in some other form—if only Miss Beaufort had said, "Can't you," or "Could n't you come in to help us?" or if the identical words that she did say had been uttered by the pastor, and not by her own sweet voice—the captain would have answered "No!" at once; and very likely, in language somewhat stronger than would ordinarily be used on such an occasion, he would have given what he would have thought some very convincing reasons for his refusal. The truth is that the idea of going into the Sunday-school had never entered into his head before this moment. But now that it had done so, and had been ushered in with the phrase "of course," how could he deny that it had been there previously without incurring a risk of lowering himself in the estimation of this lady, who—though according to her own standard, it is true—had rated him more highly than she should have done? How could he correct her supposition, or reply to her in the negative, without incurring a risk of offending her? No woman likes to be told point-blank that she has been mistaken. Would it not be a little more gentlemanly, therefore—possibly, if she should continue to press the case, a

little more entertaining to himself—to appear to be undecided?

Thoughts like these had been passing through the captain's mind, though none of them had had time to assume any very definite shape there, the while he answered:

"Why, really, Miss Beaufort, my work for the last few years has hardly been in this line."

"No," she said, "you have been killing people, I believe; and we—well, we are trying to show them how to live, you know."

"And I'm afraid," said the captain, "I should be rather a poor hand at that work."

"I'm not so sure of it," replied Bessie. "You didn't prove so poor a hand, the other evening, at the festival, captain. Didn't we have an absurd time of it?"

"But a Sunday-school, Miss Beaufort, isn't like a festival."

"Oh yes, it is," said she. "We have summer picnics and Christmas anniversaries, and all sorts of goings-on."

"But, Miss Beaufort, the Sunday-school—the regular teaching every Sunday in the school—is serious work."

"Of course it is; but, then, it's—to tell the truth, it's funny enough, too, sometimes."

"Do you suppose," asked the captain, "that anybody would give me a class if I were to come in?"

"Give you a class? Let me see: no, they're all taken. But it would be easy enough for you to get one."

"How? What do you mean?"

"Why, there's the new factory down by the river, and all the people who have just moved in there; and there are crowds of children among them."

"And you mean to say," asked the captain, "that I could go out and drum up recruits?"

"Certainly; that's the way I started my class."

"Well, that *is* an idea," said the man.

"Come to think of it," said Bessie, "it is possible that some of those children may be up to the church to-day. The superintendent spoke to the school last Sunday, and asked the scholars to invite them up. If any of them come, and you are present, perhaps you'll have an opportunity of getting a class without doing any drumming."

"By Jove!" thought the captain, "I believe I'll go and try the thing. If there's any fun in it, as Bessie says, why, there's no sense in my losing it;" and he told that young lady of his decision.

I suppose that, just here, my reader, who of course has always associated with very proper people, will be ready to say that Bessie was an exceedingly light-minded girl, and had no right to be teaching in a Sunday-school at all; and that the captain was both light-minded and

fickle-minded, too, to be drawn into doing the same thing with her, and by such inducements. But the reader must remember that the writer of a story is obliged sometimes to tell things precisely as they are, however much, for many reasons, he may desire to tell them as the reader would like to have them be. Bessie and the captain might have thought and talked very differently from what they did; but, had they done so, they would not have been Bessie and the captain, and I should have had no story whatever to tell; and think how badly off the world would have been then! Besides, if they had been proper people, the reader, who knows all about what proper people ought to do, would have been as able as myself—even out of his own imagination—to surmise, and, therefore, not need to have me to tell him, what they thought and said. And, more than this, if they had been so very, very proper, I am not sure—in fact, I am rather doubtful—whether it would have been necessary for them to have had any church to attend at all; and just now, inasmuch as I have introduced into my story both a church and a pastor, it seems absolutely necessary for me to find some people for the church to benefit. So, notwithstanding the reader's protest, Bessie and the captain must remain, I think, as we have found them.

After Bessie had ended her call on a little sick child in her class, whom she had come out thus early in the

morning in order to visit—and I have heard the mother of the child tell, with tears in her eyes, how sweetly, tenderly, and fervently Bessie used to pray with the little one—after Bessie had ended her call, she found the captain waiting in the road near by, and ready to accompany her to the Sunday-school. And, when they had reached it, if you could have seen how all the young lady teachers blushed and smiled and nodded at him! Any ordinary captain might have been contented to have marched ten miles every Sunday of his life to receive even nothing more than such a welcome!

Bessie had been right in surmising that possibly this morning some of the children who had just come to the village to live would be at the school. Before long, the captain found himself assigned to the duty of taking care of about a half-dozen of these. They were as wild a looking set of boys, between twelve and sixteen years of age, as it is often one's lot to encounter.

"Whew! look at the torchlight procession!" cried one of them.

The captain looked around, and encountered the glowing face and ringlets of Miss Inthway. At this moment she was heading a line of small boys who were filing behind her into the infant-class room. The first three of them, alas! exhibited locks of the same brilliant hue as her own. If the captain smiled to see her, and she

blushed in return to see his smile, and if others in the room, whom the boy's words had not reached, thought that they detected something in the looks that these two interchanged to talk about, was it the captain's duty or Miss Inthway's privilege to explain the reason of these looks? And if they were not explained, was anybody to blame for misunderstanding them, or for telling of what they had misunderstood, and making a good deal of mischievous gossip out of it? And if anybody were to blame, who was it? And if we had found him out, could we have done anything to him for it, or have corrected the evil that he had caused? Stop the echo after you have heard the sound that started it, then perhaps you can stop a slur after it has left the throat that uttered it.

"Hush! hush!" the captain said to the boy who had spoken out, though not with a countenance so serious that the boy felt any fear of it.

Unfortunately, the lesson for the day was that hardest of all the miracles to admit of rational explanation,—the story of Jonah; and the captain floundered as badly as the whale itself in trying to dispose of him. The questions or suggestions of the boys that he had not yet learned how to parry off, or to meet with a ready answer, gave him more trouble, he averred, than ever he had had in trying to control the most disorderly soldiers. The climax of his endeavors to draw forth their own thoughts

with reference to the subject was reached when, in reply to one of his inquiries, a boy affirmed that, if he had been Jonah, he would just have pulled out a cigar and smoked it, and made the whale sick enough to throw him up long before the three days were over. The whole class seemed to be in an uproar. The captain began to think that the fun of which Bessie had spoken was all to be on the side of the boys. Finally, he concluded that he would entertain them with a story. Stories, he had heard, would always interest young people of this character. He thought, however, that he would not make the story very long. As he was teaching in a Sunday-school, it seemed appropriate that the tale itself should be comparatively short—only the moral of it long. But when he had reached the moral, the boys had reached the end of their listening: all, that is, but one. This one still sat with his eyes firmly riveted upon the teacher. So long as only one will listen to the moral, thought the teacher, it is my duty to go on with it and explain it fully. So, although the other boys were catching flies from one another's noses, and pinching each other's shins, and arousing laughter from adjacent classes, and indignant looks from adjacent teachers, and making the captain feel that he was in the midst of a sea of troubles, he kept on still, unfolding the moral to this single boy whose eyes continued riveted upon his own. He saw that the boy was anxious to in-

terrupt him with a question. And yet, if this were done, would it not break perhaps the spell by which the teacher held him? Was it not best, so long as the boy continued to be interested, to keep on talking; if the other boys were scuffling faster and whispering louder, to keep on talking faster and louder if necessary? The captain never had been so conscientious in the fulfillment of an obligation as in the fulfillment of what he supposed to be his obligation toward this single pupil. At last, however, his climax had been reached. The moral had been argued, summed up, clinched; and, with the pleasure that can come alone with the consciousness of duty done in the midst of adverse circumstances, he leaned his frame forward with a waiting ear to hear the question and the commentary on his teachings of which this boy, so patiently and persistently gazing up at his face, was evidently so anxious to be delivered.

"Do you never shave?" asked the boy.

As the little shaver put this question, the captain's moral constitution experienced a shock, a growing sense of sickness, faintness, reeling, that might have led to graver consequences, had he not been revived by the ringing of a bell (and the smacking of the boys' lips, whom it had reminded of a dinner-bell), which was a signal, as he knew, that the teaching in the classes should be brought to an end, preparatory to the school's closing exercises. He

thought that he had never heard a bell ring whose tones sounded so sweetly.

Though, in the dismay of the moment, the captain was inclined to pass a hasty judgment on himself, as utterly incompetent for the work that he had undertaken, and to take a rash but irrevocable vow never to enter the Sunday-school again, he had reason, before the end of the week, to doubt whether his first inferences were altogether trustworthy.

On Wednesday morning, he happened to step in at the barber's. Who should confront him on the threshold of the shop but the very boy whose reckless disregard of the proprieties of time and place—and face, for that matter—had been the cause of so much disappointment and chagrin to him on the preceding Sunday? "Aha! after all," he thought to himself, as he caught sight of the youngster, "this boy's question was only professional. He was simply beginning early what a good many of his elders carry on through life—appropriating the opportunities of the sanctuary for the furtherance of trade. By-the-way, too, what a goose I was not to ask these boys about their homes and themselves, and get them to talking and thinking about something in which they were really interested!"

"Well, my boy," he said to his adversary of the last Sabbath, "is this the place where you live?"

"Why, Captain Loring," said the boy, a bright, active, light-complexioned lad, fourteen years old, perhaps, "have you come to see us? Father, father, here's Captain Loring."

The barber, thus addressed, turned about and came forward, with an air evidently more cordial than that with which he was accustomed to greet an ordinary applicant for his professional services.

"Very happy to see you, Captain Loring," he said. "Very happy to see you—very much honor—must call the old woman. Hannah! Hannah! Johnny, go call your mother."

As the boy ran out, the father continued: "That boy's been a-talking about you all the week, sir. You see, we have to use him in the shop, here, an' he don't get much schoolin'; and he ought to get some o' Sundays, and not be runnin' with the other boys so. They're a hard lot here, sir, a hard lot. But then he'll never take to Sunday-school. We've tried all of 'em that's here, sir, an' he don't like the teachers. They're too solemn, I s'pose. He only went up there last Sunday, now, 'cause,' he said, 'there was new boys as was goin' up, an' he was a-goin' with 'em.' But you've took his heart, sir. I never see anything like it."

"Yes, sir," said the mother, after she had been introduced, "an' he's been a-readin' his Bible—haven't you,

Johnny?—He's kind o' shy-like, you know.—Why, that there Bible hasn't been took down in this house, I don't know for how long, until he got a-hold on it to read that story about the whale, you know. An' he's been a-learnin' the lesson for next week, too—haven't you, Johnny?—He's an awful shy boy, that.—I'm sure if you can keep him out o' mischief, you're a-doin' more 'an we can, though he's not a bad boy, either—are you, Johnny?—But then, you see, boys as runs with other boys, they will get sassy."

"Do you go up there to the church, yourselves?" asked the captain, as though the sudden experience of having "honor thrust upon him" in the form of being considered a moral and spiritual guide in the community had aroused in him a sense of the fact that he ought to do something in order to maintain his character.

"I tell my old man he ought to go," said the woman, "but, you know, he kind o' thinks he don't believe in such things."

"But why don't you go yourself?" asked the captain, and he almost bit his lips as he did so; he was so thoroughly startled to find himself, by the force of circumstances, thrust into a position where he was acting in that very rôle of a propagandist and a proselytist, perhaps, in which, an hour before, he had been telling the pastor that it would be impossible for him to act. He was learning

by experience that, in this world, a very little step, in one direction or another, makes a very great difference with one's future. There is only one step between the gangway of a ship and the water underneath it; and the man who plays upon the edge of the gangway when the ship is under motion may tumble overboard. Captain Loring had gone into the Sunday-school (so my proper reader has decided) in order to please Bessie Beaufort, and to experience some of the "fun" of the thing. But now he was beginning to reap the consequences of his action; and, as a man of honor, it did not seem to him that he could get away from them. Of course, as I have intimated in another place, I might have made Bessie, before he crossed the threshold of that school, preach him a little sermon; and I might have pictured the captain under deep conviction of sinfulness and a desire to reform; and, after all of this self-conscious action on the part of Bessie and himself, we might have been prepared for the circumstances I am now relating. But there are things in this world that, occasionally, do not begin in this self-conscious way. And in the present story—possibly in all stories—one may be truer to the facts that he is trying to relate if he acknowledge this.

"Why don't you go to church yourself?" asked the captain, addressing this mother of his Sunday-school scholar.

"Why, you see, I can't go up there with them folks.

I haven't got no dresses—don't you see?—that would be decent-like; and then them pews—they're all of 'em somebody or other's. My man, now, he could sit most anywhere, an' they wouldn't notice him."

"Haven't any dresses?" said the captain, laughing. "Well, well, now, do you suppose those people want you to dress as well as they do? Don't you know that they'd a great deal rather have poor dressing all around them, so as to show themselves off better, by the contrast?"

"I never 'a' thought o' that," said the woman.

"No?" said the captain; and to tell the truth, his sense of his own originality would have been dashed a little if he had supposed that she had thought of it. "Why, of course it is so, isn't it?—and as for the pew, why"—and the captain had stumbled into the statement before he had fairly thought of what he was saying—"I'll be whipped now, if I don't hire enough pews, if necessary, for all the folks of all the boys in my class. You'll have to come then, won't you?"

There is no need of telling the result of such speeches as this. The next Sunday the barber and his wife and son were all in church. And when the other boys of the class, and those in the village who "didn't go to any Sunday-school," had heard of the captain's visit to the barber's, and how he wasn't "stuck up" at all; and more than this, how he had risen in the army, and was the very

one who had made such a deal of fun for all the people at the church-festival, a week or two before, they flocked to the Sunday-school in such numbers that the captain found his hands full; but they all paid him such respect and deference that he never had any more trouble in controlling them.

CHAPTER VII.

A LITTLE FISHING THAT WAS NOT VERY QUIET.

THERE ought to be "an effort made" in Chartville church and community in behalf of temperance,—at least this was the opinion of Mrs. Beaufort, who had communicated her conclusion to the pastor, and, in the same breath, urged upon him the propriety of inviting Mr. Gaspack from the city in order to assist him in a series of "special temperance services." The pastor was willing enough to admit that there ought to be an effort made in behalf of this reform, and a good many efforts made, but he was somewhat loath to accept the whole scope of Mrs. Beaufort's suggestion. At the same time he had learned that people in this world, especially if they occupy official positions, must often do things merely because other people desire to have them do them; and he had a sufficiently humble estimate of the results of his own labors in the cause to which his attention had now been directed, to be open to conviction, when assured

that the assistance of some one else would enable him to perform these labors more acceptably. He really knew nothing of Mr. Gaspack of such a nature as to lead to the inference that this gentleman's proffered services would not prove beneficial to the neighborhood. Whatever impressions of a contrary kind might have been received seemed to be mainly the results of mere prejudice. No man should be governed by his prejudices. He determined that he himself should not be. Half a dozen addresses by Mr. Gaspack could not do so very much harm, he thought, no matter what was said in them. Besides, for himself, it would be exceedingly unwise to offend Mrs. Beaufort, as he might do by refusing to accept her advice,—unwise so far as concerned the interests of the church; unwise, as the reader has already been made aware, so far as concerned his own interests.

So about a week later the door of the lecture-room of Chartville church was swinging open every evening just at sunset, while the Goosneks and the Gobblupps, Deacon Fleischbottom and all the other good people of the neighborhood, were winding slowly thither from every quarter in order to patronize (this certainly is the appropriate word as applied to some of them) the "special temperance services."

The first of these services had been held on a Saturday evening, partly because Saturday was a half-holiday with

many of the people, old and young, who, therefore, would be likely to be present in large numbers, and thus start off the series of meetings successfully; partly because whatever was done on this evening could be well followed up by "efforts" on the Sabbath. At this meeting Mr. Gaspack had made his first appearance. But with him—in his own opinion and in that of his admirers—to come was to conquer. His decidedly tempestuous style of oratory, bursting like a thunder-shower from a clear sky, immediately after a gentle though earnest appeal by the pastor, had soon obliterated the substance of this appeal from the thoughts of the audience as effectually as his portly figure, standing in front of the pastor's form, had obliterated it from the audience's vision. "You see, he is a man of force—real native strength," Mrs. Beaufort had said when the meeting was over. She was "really almost sorry for the pastor, not that he" (the pastor) "hadn't spoken well, you know. He had spoken, in fact, remarkably well—for him; but such a contrast! And then to think that Mr. Gaspack wasn't a college-educated man at all—had had no such advantages! Ah! it was the heart, the heart; to have the heart enlisted in a cause like this—that was the great thing!" And as what Mrs. Beaufort said was sure to be repeated all over the village—if for no other reason, to let all the village know who the privileged being was to whom Mrs. Beaufort, with

reference to any subject, had deigned to unbosom herself —and as, until at least within a few weeks, she had been considered to be the very best friend that Mr. Thompson had, of course her remarks alone were enough to crowd the church on the occasion of the next appearance of her favorite—i. e., on the Sunday evening following—though whether at the expense of the popularity and success of the pastor, who was to continue with them long after Mr. Gaspack had taken his departure, the reader may judge for himself.

On this Sunday evening Mr. Gaspack had evidently come to the conclusion, in view of the great numbers who had thronged to hear him, that he was the master of the situation. What more natural for a truthful and ingenuous spirit like his own than to take upon itself the air and authority of a master of the situation? Moreover, like a great many other people who have read little and thought much—about themselves—and possess, in addition, that susceptibility of temperament which causes one to be easily kindled to enthusiastic admiration for the object of his thoughts, he had arrived, after many years of persistent self-culture all tending in the same direction, at the conclusion (than which what could be more satisfactory?) that anything that he himself did not know, wish, or feel, was not worth knowing, wishing, or feeling. Could any conclusion, if communicated to others,

prove more beneficial to them than this? Was there any better method of instruction or appeal through which another's soul could become more completely disinthralled from all the petty annoyances that come to one so blind to the conditions of perfect peace as still to study, doubt, and struggle? What more noble aim, then, could thrill his trembling locks, explode his tones, or animate his arms, than to become the prophet of what he acted as if he thoroughly believed to be the kingdom within himself?—the Lord of which, when ruling within so great a man as he was, needed apparently, in his opinion, to exercise no contemporaneous lordship within the minds or consciences of any who surrounded him.

It was as the prophet of this belief that he had spoken on this second evening. It happened to be the Sabbath-day. Of course, then, he was expected to treat the subject that he had to handle from a religious view-point. But could there be more than one religious view-point? And could that be—ought that to be—any other than his own? And as he knew that, in a village in which churches were necessarily few, the present congregation must be composed of those of almost every denomination of Christians, what more commendable or scriptural course could he take, where people were of many minds, than to try to make them of one mind? And nothing made him shudder more, he was wont to say, than a sug-

gestion, such as (to do him justice) made his head shake violently as he turned it in the direction of Mrs. Beaufort during the pastor's sermon on this very morning—a suggestion that the pastor had made when urging all to unite together in order to make the special services a success—to the effect that Christians might become of one mind by agreeing to be of different minds. This certainly was not an orthodox view of the subject. And Mr. Gaspack had been a member of a Christian church for years, and knew what he was talking about. He was as anxious, he had told Mrs. Beaufort, as the pastor himself was to have the "special services" succeed, but not at the expense of having the truth compromised! When, therefore, on the evening of this day, he had found that a crowd had assembled to hear him, he had taken occasion to emphasize (and he prided himself that he knew how to emphasize) every peculiar doctrine of the peculiar denomination, and of the peculiar school of the denomination, to which he himself—and, unfortunately for Chartville congregation, the pastor, too—belonged. When he had struck his fist for the last time against the Bible, there was certainly no one in the room whom he had not given reason to believe that, in his opinion (and his opinion was an exceedingly important one to know about), the heaven above, to which he would draw or drive them, was a place designed for very peculiar people.

When he had taken his seat, the pastor rose, evidently impressed with the idea that a few there present might not be induced to struggle very hard to enter a narrow way that merely led to a region where they could share in the society or become submissive to the sway of one constituted and educated precisely like the man who had addressed them. In a few brief sentences, in which he did his best to give no offense to any one, he pointed out the difference between what his church considered to be essential and non-essential doctrines; then he endeavored to draw the thoughts of the audience back to the particular subject that they had come together to-night to consider; and ended, like a true fisher of men as he was, by presenting a few broad inducements to a reformed life, cast like a net upon the waters with a desire to draw in all the fishes—not only great ones, like Mr. Gaspack and those resembling him, but also small ones, whom the world undoubtedly would be more likely to overlook. But Mr. Gaspack had evidently been offended. Had not his own infallibility been impugned? On the third evening of the special services, as he came somewhat earlier than usual to the place of meeting, I am afraid—though I should scarcely have ventured to suggest the idea to Mrs. Beaufort—that he was not in any very sanctified humor. Upon entering the room, he found there Mrs. Gobblupp and Mrs. Goosnek and a few more, who,

like many other very good members of our church congregations when they get together, seemed to have resolved themselves, by common consent, into a Committee of the Whole, intent upon investigating and determining the character of all their fellow-members who were not present. Forsooth, was it not a Christian's first duty to know about any improprieties of life in his own communion?

They were talking now, as perhaps became those who had been brought together for the purpose that had caused them to assemble, of the latest new "sensations" in the village; and, as Mr. Gaspack's entrance necessarily turned the tide of talk from him, it ebbed to dash at Captain Loring.

"He's got the hearts of all the girls, at any rate," said Mrs. Gobblupp, who, it must be owned, had the weakness, even behind the man's back, to reveal a soft spot in her heart for him. Had he not escorted her daughter Sally round and round the room, in the sight of all the people, on the evening of the festival?

"Yes, yes, I should think he had," said Mrs. Goosnek, whose daughter the captain had not escorted. "Did you ever see anything so silly? Now, there's Bessie Beaufort, you know—"

"You can't say anything against her anyway," said Mrs. Gobblupp, who, without knowing anything of the extent of the intimacy existing between Mr. Gaspack and

the Beaufort family, knew enough of his relations to them to desire to have him prepared to carry them a favorable report of what she had said of them in their absence.

"You don't get up very early Sunday mornin', I guess," answered Mrs. Goosnek. "Such goin's on I never see before anyhow—walking to meet each other on the road long before any decent folks, as has a proper regard for Sunday mornin', has got their breakfast, then walkin' up an' down together, an' puttin' their heads together an' talkin', then she a-goin' into a house an' stayin' as much as twenty minutes, an' he a-sittin' outside on a fence, an' waitin' for her, an' then both together a-walkin' on again, and a-waitin' for each other after Sunday-school an' church. I'd like to know if you ever see one of *my* girls doin' that. If Bessie Beaufort *is* so dead in love with him, as everybody knows she is, she isn't a modest girl to show it as she does, that's all."

"And when did you see all that?" asked Mrs. Gobblupp.

"When did I see?" answered Mrs. Goosnek. "When, to be sure, but when everybody else see it—or, best o' ways, somethin' of it—two weeks ago last Sunday? My daughter Susie, she was in the front-room a-dressin', an' I just heard her a-callin' out like mad; and then she come in swingin' her stocking like the flag-man at the

station; and says she, 'Come here, come here. Here's Bessie Beaufort an' the captain a-sparking here together.' An' I just got out o' bed, an' my old man, an' all of us, an' we just sat an' watched 'em; an', as I said afore, such goin's on I never see in all my life."

"That isn't the worst of it either," said little old Miss Sniffins. "There's Miss Inthway, too, and she's old enough, as goodness knows, to know better; and right before the whole Sunday-school the other day—why, there was as many as fifty people there that saw it—she just turned red as—why, as red as your ribbon there, Mrs. Gobblupp, just to see the captain turn around and look at her. And then, they say, he just blushed as red as she did, and then they both of them just giggled out at each other like a couple of school-girls. Now, I always hold there isn't smoke like that without some fire. And they *do* say that, with all the airs she puts on, and all her talk about the catechism and the Bible, she's a mighty frivolous girl."

"An' the captain's just from the war, too," went on Mrs. Goosnek, "an' everybody knows the morals isn't good *there*."

"I don't like to criticise," said Deacon Fleischbottom. "My conscience is agin it. And yet I don't see how such folks git into Sunday-school or the church at all. Who knows now anything about this Captain Loring?

We only know he ain't a Christian, that's all. He went straight out o' church, just like a goat, last Sunday, at the communion; and, if he ain't a Christian, I don't see for one why Christian people, whether they be men or girls, should go with him."

"But the pastor brought him here," said Mrs. Gobblupp. But just at this moment the pastor himself entered the room; and so, of course, this part of the discussion ended.

During this conversation, Mr. Gaspack had been standing at the desk, absorbed apparently in making selections from the hymn-book and the Bible that he had been persistently thumbing. But not a word that had been uttered had escaped him. As he listened to the talk—it would not do, of course, to accuse Mr. Gaspack of experiencing any such feelings as those of jealousy and envy—but as he heard the names of the family with which he was on such intimate terms bandied about so lightly, and considered that the cause of all was the conduct, no doubt abundantly light in itself, of this Captain Loring, who, according to his own acknowledgment, was not a Christian, is it strange that he should have felt something chivalric striving within him, and prompting him to defend the weaker parties—something, too, embracing a wider scope than the interests of a single family, something calling upon all that was noble in his nature to de-

fend every one of the tender lambs of the Sabbath-school from the ravages of this wolf that might destroy them? Is it strange that, if it were so ordered in the course of the evening that an opportunity was offered him of giving expression to this desire within, he should manfully have performed his whole duty in view of the circumstances without regard to consequences? There are, perhaps, no greater fools than those who fancy that there is only one right side to every question, or that the advocate of only one of two or three conflicting measures is prompted to his views or deeds by noble motives. Let us, at least, not be among their number. Whatever we may think of Mr. Gaspack's motives, let us do him the justice of believing that some of them—though possibly not visible to ourselves—were worthy of the character that Mrs. Beaufort had admired so much.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME FISH THAT RAN AWAY FROM A NOISY FISHER'S NET.

Mrs. Beaufort had suggested that in these temperance services, which were designed especially to benefit the younger portion—at least the younger men—of the congregation, the scholars of the Sunday-school, so far as possible, should sit together in classes with their teachers. Accordingly, Will Loring, like the accommodating fellow that he was, had taken a seat this evening with his own class, around which, in fulfillment of the principle that "birds of a feather flock together," there had collected a crowd of other rough boys in no way connected with this church, nor, so far as one could judge from what they did, with any church. Everything was going on smoothly, and the pastor was congratulating himself that the indiscretion manifested by Mr. Gaspack on the preceding evening was not to be repeated, when, at the end of a really eloquent appeal of this gentleman's, during which, however, his imagination had undoubtedly got the better

of his judgment, he called upon all those present who could join with him in a very well delivered but by no means sensible or truthful sentiment which he had just uttered to rise and remain standing.

While many of the congregation, as frequently happens in cases of the kind, carried away by their feelings to such an extent as not to be able to use their judgments, rose in response to this appeal, the part of the room in which were sitting Captain Loring and the crowd that had gathered about him revealed scarcely a single standing figure. Is it a wonder that the current of Mr. Gaspack's eloquence should have been turned, with all the vehemence that characterized it, in that direction? To what better purpose could it be put than to overwhelm, in order to cleanse completely, that place which he had discovered in the corner, and which he chose to speak of with many opprobrious epithets? But no one likes to be called names. These boys did not like it, and soon, by the scraping of their feet, they began to manifest their dislike of it. At this, Mr. Gaspack began to become more vehement, and just as he did so he happened to observe Captain Loring there among them, and still retaining his sitting posture. Here clearly was his opportunity. Was not this teacher of the Sabbath-school showing unmistakably by his example his lack of sympathy with "the cause?" And who could tell how much his

influence had had to do with the behavior of the younger people who surrounded him? Mr. Gaspack shook his fist and cleared his throat for a fresh exertion. At the same time he had sufficient presence of mind and knowledge of human nature to avoid the appearance of making what he had to say entirely personal. He turned his face from the captain in the corner of the room to direct it toward the audience in its centre. He uttered only general principles. He was valiant only for the right. He did not even use the personal pronoun, except in the plural. But he had scarcely ended a single sentence of a passage in which he had undertaken to enlighten his audience with reference to the fate that would overtake the churches that "committed the spiritual guardianship of youth, of tender and susceptible youth, to those who had no sympathy with right life" (right life being, just now, in Mr. Gaspack's opinion, the act of standing up as godfather to any extravagant conception to which his own fertile imagination might give birth); "who were therefore but blind leaders of the blind; who were captains of damnation to those who needed the Captain of Salvation"—before such a hiss was started by Johnny, the barber's son, and taken up by all the boys in the corner, as silenced, for a moment, even Mr. Gaspack. Unfortunately, too, just when the hiss had started, Captain Loring, who had surmised the drift of the speaker's thoughts,

and desired to prevent a repetition of any act of his that might provoke him, had risen (he was only two seats from the door) in order to leave the room. Innocent and even commendable as was his motive, it made his action appear to be—possibly it was—the exciting cause of the hisses. On seeing him leave, therefore, Mr. Gaspack turned pale, then red, then roared out something to "the boys" about the appropriateness of their following the example of their leader; whereat, as though they had understood him to tell them to leave the room, though he had done nothing of the sort, they all rose up, and, keeping step with a stamping loud enough for a whole regiment, they tramped out slowly into the open air, where, for some time, their voices could be heard cheering and jeering, until, as was found out afterward, Captain Loring stopped them.

Was ever anything like this heard of before in Chartville or any other church? Certainly never. And as it all had happened while Mr. Gaspack was speaking upon temperance, and while he, from the very fact that he was speaking upon temperance, had the sympathy, of course, of all the good people present, these good people, like very many others of their class, who suppose that nothing wrong whatever can be done by one who at the same time is doing right, and nothing right whatever by one who at the same time is doing wrong, were satisfied at once that the whole blame of this disgraceful and blas-

phemous proceeding was due to the boys and to Captain Loring, who, as it appeared, had led them on.

This opinion, whatever he may have thought of the knowledge of human nature and the degree of reflection that it displayed, the pastor saw clearly depicted in the faces of those before him. So did Mr. Gaspack, and he "improved the occasion" to clinch, with some sharp and ringing blows, the nail which he now seemed to be convinced that he had struck upon the head. Ay, had he not found out at last the head and front of the offending in this Chartville church? Had he not discovered, had not all who had witnessed this scene this evening discovered, what was the result, and the legitimate result, of that spirit of indifference and levity which, as he felt it his duty to insinuate (though, as he said afterward, he would not for the world have cast any reflections upon the pastor), controlled in the councils of Chartville church? Could they not all perceive just why his eloquent appeals of the two preceding evenings had had so little effect in this community?

And, all this while, there sat the poor pastor in the pulpit. He heard his most intimate friend, whom everybody knew to be his most intimate friend—as distinctly as though the name had been mentioned—misrepresented and maligned. He knew that, as a consequence, this friend would be detested by most of the community;

and yet he knew that it would be useless for him, here and now, to attempt a defence. He heard this current of vituperative rhetoric poured forth in a way that he felt convinced would prove fatal not only to his own influence as a man and pastor, but also to the influence of his church, in promoting the good which he had hoped that the church would do not only to the captain but to hundreds of others in the neighborhood. And yet he knew that he could not, here and now, oppose this. Was it anything but natural that, during the rest of the evening, he should feel like what he was confident that some of the audience would consider him to be, a traitor to his friend and a coward to his own conscience; that for a moment he should feel ready to acknowledge that the victory of defamation had been complete? Those who saw him rise and heard him offer the closing prayer that evening said that they had never before seen him appear so humble.

Possibly, if the pastor had been perfectly frank with himself (but no man is so), he would have been ready to acknowledge a reason for his humility in addition even to those already mentioned. Immediately after the confusion that had followed when "the boys" had left the room, he had noticed that Martha Beaufort, who played the cabinet organ, and sat at one side of it close by the door, had also disappeared. Why had she done so? Had

she gone into the vestibule to meet Captain Loring, and to speak to him about this matter? Had she merely withdrawn from the room on account of her sympathy with the captain, and to show her disapprobation of the course of Mr. Gaspack in attacking him? Either answer to this question was of a nature to cause discomfort to him who had asked it. It was therefore both a surprise and a joy to him, at the conclusion of the meeting, when, after having spoken to a few who had remained for conversation, he turned into his study and encountered, on the threshold of it, Miss Martha Beaufort.

"Oh, Mr. Thompson," she said, with an unusually warm glance of those confiding eyes, "can't we do something to get rid of that horrid man?"

"Why, Miss Martha," said the pastor, wholly startled by her sudden appearance there, and by her expression, "I thought—"

"Yes, I know what you thought," she answered. "Poor dear mamma means it all right, but she doesn't know, and she *will* not know, this man. And I 'm sure you don't like him. You can't like him, can you? And he's doing so much harm here—to all those dear young men now, and—"

"To dear Captain Loring," said the pastor; though before the words were out of his mouth his face was burning with shame at the consciousness of having re-

vealed, as he thought, the whole story of the existence within him of that jealousy which before this he would have been unwilling to acknowledge even to himself. And when he blushed so—why, Martha could not help it—she blushed too. But just then Bessie Beaufort's voice, together with Mr. Gaspack's, was heard calling upon the sister to tell her that their carriage was ready to take them home.

"I must go now," said Martha, "but I know you'll do something about it." And the eyes that shone out of the flushing face to linger for a moment upon his own, were they not full of confidence? not only so, but of the very deepest sympathy?

"It cannot be," thought the pastor, "that I have lost her yet. There still is hope."

CHAPTER IX.

A FISHER WHO, FOR SOME REASON, WAS VACILLATING.

"THERE still is hope," thought the pastor, as he rose and looked at the bright sunshine streaming into his room on the morning following. And, somehow or other, the more he thought of it, the more convinced he became that the fulfillment of this hope, or of any hope that had to do with his own happiness or his church's welfare, depended on his being able to gratify Miss Martha Beaufort's wish, expressed in the desire of the previous evening, that in some way he would get rid of "that horrid man." But how to do this—that was the question. He puzzled himself over it all the time that he was eating his breakfast. He puzzled over it after breakfast when he sat down and tried to write a sermon. He puzzled over it when he rose and began to walk restlessly up and down the room. He puzzled over it when he stood looking out of the window in the direction of the Beaufort mansion, when he looked down to pull out

his watch and note the hour. He puzzled over it when he turned for a score of times to walk up and down his room again, and for a score of times to repeat the same movements at the window. He puzzled over it—was it anything else, think you, that he was puzzling over?—when he suddenly flung off his working-attire, and began to make elaborate preparations, and then to carry them out, for a complete change in his wardrobe. Whither so early? and why so scrupulously clad, O thou descendant of the Dickories? Let time unfold.

The pastor's object—he himself felt convinced of it—was a conscientious one. Could anything be more so? He was about to save Captain Loring, to save "the boys" of the village, to save his whole church, to save himself; and to do it all—and this brought a thrill to his heart that a more skeptical nature might have deemed suspicious—to do it all for the sake of Miss Martha Beaufort.

It almost made him run instead of walk along the road, as he thought how comprehensive and ennobling was the end that he had set out to accomplish, and what satisfaction it should give him when it was attained.

He had been completely absorbed in this thought when, suddenly, he found himself face to face with the gateway that opened into the path leading up to the Beaufort mansion. Then it occurred to him—it was a pleasant

morning and still early—that he would continue his walk a little farther.

Ah, Mr. Thompson, Rev. H. Dickory Thompson, why did you hesitate? Why, in the first flush of your zeal, did you not go boldly into the house, call for Mrs. Beaufort, appeal to her acknowledged interest in the church, and, in a straightforward business-like way, tell her that it was inexpedient to have Mr. Gaspack continue his services, and ask her to use her influence, as delicately as she chose, to have him bring them to a close? Why did you throw away those brave resolutions and profound arguments upon which you had so prided yourself, and which for the last two hours you had been so assiduously rehearsing? Did you not know—would not your own judgment, if you had permitted yourself to be guided by it, have assured you—that a woman, in fact one of any sex, invariably has more respect, and therefore regard, for the soul that stands up alone, fearless of opposition, to champion what he claims to be the right, than for a whole regiment of sycophants, deferentially bowing and scraping, even though they may agree with the object of their adulation in every syllable that they utter? Why, then, did you abandon the courageous, simple, and straightforward method that you had determined on? Was it because your conscience told you that, after all, your motives were not so simple and straightforward, not so

single and disinterested, as they might be? Were you apprehensive that the penetrating sense of Mrs. Beaufort might detect the fact? And, if so, why should you have been apprehensive about it?

It is strange—is it not, reader?—that this man, whose state of heart, if acknowledged, would have conveyed the greatest possible compliment to Miss Martha Beaufort, to Mrs. Beaufort, and to all the Beaufort family, was yet so diffident about the slightest act that should reveal even a hint of the truth. Forsooth, he would blush from head to foot just to fancy how he should feel if Mrs. Beaufort should surmise that he and Martha had come to sympathize even so far as to agree in their opinions concerning Mr. Gaspack. And yet we all have pretty much the same experience. Why, I myself, before my mind had grown sufficiently mature to write this story—if the reader by a stretch of his imagination can conceive of such a period—remember now how, once upon a time, I too discovered, by the presence of unwonted flutterings in my bosom, how I also had a similar yearning for the companionship of a similar combination of human flesh and—what I then considered—human coloring. And in that romantic period it often happened that, the evening after I had called upon her, and the next and next and next, I would sit alone, unable utterly to do a thing but face my mirror, and to meditate upon the problem

how to arrange to call on her again. At last, upon the fifth night possibly, I would dress myself, pull on a pair of gloves a size too small for me, and, saying "I have waited long enough; to-night I *will* call," saunter out and down the street, and reach her door-step. But, alas! once there, my heart would fail me. I would say: "I cannot—not to-night; it's soon, too soon. Were I to go in now she really might suppose that I thought something of her!" So I would stand a while debating with myself, or cross the street and try to look from a distance into her parlor-window, wondering who that fellow was that was with her now, and there I would linger, walking up and down for hours, until aroused at last by a strong conviction that every policeman on the street had marked me out as some suspicious character. And this absurd performance I would repeat for nights and nights, until, perhaps upon the tenth night, I would summon up sufficient pluck to ring her door-bell with a throbbing heart, pass into her parlor with a face as flushed as Daniel's prophets entering into the fiery furnace, and then spend all the evening talking to her sister! for fear still that the girl I fancied really might suppose that I thought something of her. Ah me! but what a fool I was! And how that girl confirmed my judgment of her merits when at last she married one of your blood-full, beef-like, practical business men, and so was saved from

life-long agitation and aspiration with one of your nervous, literary —! I can't help thinking now how God preserved her children—for she bore one every year from that time onward till she died—from certain experiences that would have been very different from what they were had she chosen to do otherwise.

However, there is no design just here to cast insinuations of a detrimental character on the temperament or conduct of the Rev. Mr. Thompson. It is true that, on the morning we have been describing, he did extend his walk. It is true that he contracted it again, and stood once more in front of the gate that he had vowed to enter. It is true that again and again he repeated the same extension and contraction of his walk, and with the same result. It is true that Mrs. Beaufort, sitting in the nursery in the upper story of the Beaufort mansion, and Bessie and Martha Beaufort and Miss Inthway all saw his actions, and wondered what was the matter. It is true that, after a time, they ascribed them to a vacillating tendency of mind. It is true that they, as well as all of my sensible readers, considered such a tendency of mind a mark of weakness—so different, you know, from anything evinced by Mr. Gaspack. Ah! yes, ye Beauforts, a mark of weakness truly; and he might have done so many things that, in your opinion, would have seemed a mark of strength! He might have boldly attacked Mr.

Gaspack the evening before this at the church; but, then, his doing so might have divided Chartville church forever. He might have boldly attacked him in your presence here this morning; but, then, this weakness has degrees. A man whose spirit yields to the strength of love may have some character left him, after all.

But to go on with our story: The end of Mr. Thompson's vacillation evinced, if anything, more weakness than did its beginning. As in the case of all men when, for any reason, reflection gets the better of courage, the idea had flitted through his head that his objects might be attained best indirectly—in other words, there had dangled down upon his mental vision, like the ragged end of a ship's cable, one of the tow-like ringlets of Miss Inthway, and, like a drowning man when snatching at a straw to save himself, he had snatched at this. Miss Inthway had declared that she wished to consult him on some question of theology. He had never called upon her. She was one of his parishioners. Why should he not call upon her now? And if while doing so he should get an opportunity of seeing Mrs. Beaufort, why, then, he could speak to her of Mr. Gaspack, and his object could be accomplished—so he thought—without an appearance of design, but accidentally and naturally, as it were. Or, even if Mrs. Beaufort should not happen to appear, what was to prevent him, as a last resort, from sending

up his name to her? At least, by calling on Miss Inthway first, he should get more time to think the matter over.

But before he had decided definitely, even in his own mind, what would be his wisest course, all things considered, he found himself already in the pathway leading to the mansion, where there was now no longer any possibility of retreat. He had nothing to do but nervously and hastily to ring the door-bell. When the servant came to answer it, he uttered the name that happened to be nearest to his lips, and announced himself as a visitor for Miss Inthway.

That announcement raised a flutter in the Beaufort household: in the servant-girl, who was a naughty Roman Catholic, and giggled in Mr. Thompson's very face when she heard him utter the name; in Mrs. Beaufort and Bessie and Martha, who could only think that this was the matured result of the pastor's walking up and down so many times in the road before he had entered at their gate; in the little children in the nursery, who were now let loose for a recess, to their own delight and their mother's provocation, "who couldn't see why the pastor hadn't had sense enough to call on their teacher at a more appropriate hour;" and last, not least, in Miss Inthway, who had also witnessed the preliminary promenade, and, conscious of the manner in which she had recently fasci-

nated Captain Loring, made her toilet before her mirror with the proud satisfaction of a woman who has reason to feel that her efforts in curling her hair and brushing her teeth, powdering her nose and pinching her cheeks, are not to be expended in vain.

CHAPTER X.

HOW THE VACILLATING FISHER'S TACKLE WOULD NOT WORK.

After a time—it seemed to the pastor a very long time indeed, for during it he had repented over and over again that he had not called first for Mrs. Beaufort—the object of his visit, dressed evidently with unusual care, descended into the parlor.

"I happened to be taking a walk this morning," said the pastor (ah! Mr. Thompson, what has become of your veracity? "Happened!" Your very attire shows that you had prepared yourself for this walk, and that most carefully)—"I happened to be taking a walk, and I thought I would call in for a moment and give you a little pastoral visit. You said, you know, that there was something that you wished to ask me."

Unlucky Mr. Thompson! Unhappy Miss Inthway! Why could not this man have given this woman reason to believe that he had thought of her before he had reached the road, and had now some personal as well as

pastoral interest in her? Had he taken such a course, he would have spoken only the truth to her. Had he done so, she, it is possible, in the days to come, would have spoken only the truth of him. But this, alas! he did not do. He blundered in his very first expression to her. He blundered, further on in his conversation, when he left the governess to infer that he was more than willing to discuss Mr. Gaspack's methods with Mrs. Beaufort, or, indeed, with any other of the people of the parish with whom he was accustomed to consult. He blundered when, in answer to a direct question that the governess put, he left her to infer that what he wished to say would not be wholly commendatory of the reformer's "efforts." He blundered, finally and fatally, when, with a fatuity that seemed to-day to possess him, he informed the governess that he wished to call this morning not only upon herself, but also upon the lady of the house and her daughters.

In such circumstances, after so much had been made of the pastor's request to see her only, it may be inferred that the governess felt complimented by this statement no more highly than did the other members of the household, to whom she hastened to communicate it. Mrs. Beaufort, after receiving a full report of the pastor's conversation with Miss Inthway, informed her daughters that she would excuse them to their visitor, and, all aglow

with indignation to think that he had been endeavoring in an underhand way, as she supposed, to weaken the influence in her own household of her dear friend, Mr. Gaspack, descended into his presence with a tread whose very sound appeared to marshal about her the forces of an impending battle.

"Good-morning, Mr. Thompson," she said. "I'm sorry to hear that you're not pleased with Mr. Gaspack, and have been expressing your complaints to the members of my household. And he's been doing the poor girl so much good—doing her soul, Mr. Thompson—doing not only the practical but the spiritual life of all of us so much good during his stay here! It's a dangerous thing, Mr. Thompson—I won't say more—I'll only say it's a very dangerous thing to undermine, behind his back, the influence of a person who, whatever may be his faults, is really accomplishing what we all know Mr. Gaspack to be accomplishing here."

Alas for Mr. Thompson! How had he ever tried to undermine Mr. Gaspack's influence, or, in fact, the influence of any other person, behind his back? This was the one thing, more than anything else, that his sensitive, cautious, honorable nature supposed that it had never, in any possible circumstances, been misled into doing. Last night, when Martha Beaufort had been talking to him about her mother's friend, he had been careful not

to drop a single syllable that should let her know his own opinions of this friend. To-day he was sure that not a syllable of the kind had escaped him while conversing with Miss Inthway. Unfortunate man! he had forgotten that he had been dealing with the members of a sex whose penetration is so keen as to require alone the glancing of an eye or the waving of a finger in order to detect the inmost secret of the most secretive soul; from whom the springs of speech may burst and flow unceasingly in answer to a gesture slight as that which, of old, nerved the arm of Moses at Massah. Mr. Thompson really had uttered nothing against Mr. Gaspack; yet doubtless both Miss Martha and Miss Inthway would have been ready to take an oath before a court of justice that he had uttered everything that was necessary in order to convey to them the most comprehensive understanding conceivable of his opinions.

And perhaps he had done so! A poor man hardly knows what he has or has not done when a lady, whose respect he is anxious to preserve, begins to accuse him. He can scarcely insinuate, even in the mildest manner, that she or any of her friends have been lying, without incurring a new accusation of what in her opinion is the worst fault possible—impoliteness. In the present instance, moreover, Miss Martha or Miss Inthway had been Mrs. Beaufort's informant. Could it have been Miss

Martha? the pastor asked himself. If so, was he prepared to say that she had indulged in misrepresentation? More than this, was he prepared to think even that she had done so? Might he himself not have said a good deal more than he had supposed that he had said? With these doubts in his mind, he was simply giving a truthful expression to what was there when he refrained from attempting to deny, point-blank, Mrs. Beaufort's accusation, or even to remove the edge from it by explaining, as he might have done, the caution that he had exercised when merely answering, as he could not have helped doing, the direct questions concerning Mr. Gaspack asked by those who were now, apparently, so ready to make accusations.

By adopting the course that he did, he gave Mrs. Beaufort every advantage over him in the conversation that followed. And yet all the while he was in the right with reference to the subject about which they were talking. As pastor of the church, he undoubtedly had a right to say to any of his parishioners a good deal more about Mr. Gaspack's method of presenting truth than, according to any supposition, it could be proved that he had said, and this either before Mr. Gaspack's face or behind his back; and possibly Mrs. Beaufort herself would have recognized this right if only, instead of trying to make excuses to her and arguing with her (as a bachelor

friend of mine affirms that a man should never try to do with a woman), he had ventured, as her pastor, to assert it; if only he had been less sensitive about wounding her feelings, less thoughtful about the interests of his church, less careful about keeping in the good graces of Miss Martha. And yet, because her antagonist was willing to waive a natural tendency to self-assertion, because he was sensitive, thoughtful, and careful, this woman during her conversation with him had lost all the remaining respect that she had had for him, either as a pastor or a man. We human beings are queerly constituted creatures, are we not?

Of course, under such conditions, the result of the conversation was very different from what Mr. Thompson would have liked. After a number of pauses and appeals, in every one of which he felt that he was assuming more and more the character of a stranger to the family rather than its friend, as well as of an outsider of the church rather than its pastor, Mrs. Beaufort declared emphatically that, as for her, she would have nothing whatever to do with asking Mr. Gaspack to discontinue his services; that, if the pastor chose to do so, why, he might do so; but she, for one, would not be instrumental in it, would not approve of it, would not defend it; and, of course, the pastor knew that these latter words meant much more than they had expressed.

Accordingly, he rose and took his leave, with, possibly, more stiffness, but not with less politeness, than if nothing out of the ordinary course had happened. But the door had hardly closed behind him before his heart was beating violently, and his blood surging wildly—it seemed to make every nerve within him tremble—to think of the presumption and impertinence of this woman, and of his own submissive pusillanimity in view of it. He had sacrificed his very manhood, so he thought, upon the altar of his fancy for this woman's daughter, who perhaps—yes, now that he had come to think of it, who probably—had lied about his conversation with her on the evening previous.

In such a mood as this, he had turned into a path that led first through Mrs. Beaufort's garden and orchard, and then across the fields, by a short cut, to his home. He had gone but a few steps before he came to an arbor through which the path in which he was walking passed. The arbor was surrounded on every side by grape-vines, now laden with the fruit of the season, which completely shielded, from the view of one who was on the outside, any person who might happen to be within it. What was his surprise, on entering it, to find seated, in an easy-chair that stood on a little platform at one side of the way, the identical young lady concerning whom his thoughts were now occupied! She was dressed in a

charming morning wrapper, and apparently hard at work on some embroidery. As he caught sight of her, his first resolve was to hurry past her, with only a slight bow of recognition. He thought that he had had enough to do, for one morning at least, with the members of this family. But this resolve the young lady herself prevented him from carrying into execution.

"Why, Mr. Thompson, you are not going to pass me by in that style, are you? Come, I really want to know, you know, if we're really going to get rid of that horrid man?—It isn't wrong for me to call him a horrid man, is it?" she added, half seriously, half playfully, as she seemed to detect something unwontedly sober in his countenance.

"No, of course," said the pastor, with a little hesitation and no little embarrassment, "you can call him what you choose, of course—only I oughtn't to be held responsible for anything you choose to say yourself when we're together."

"Of course not, Mr. Thompson, of course not," said the girl, with a satisfied little shake of the head, and pausing for a moment to enjoy inwardly the effect of the contrast between the bright colors of her gown and the embroidery work, which her pretty little hands were spreading out and stroking on her lap.

"Did I say anything to you last night," asked the

pastor, "to lead you to infer that I agreed with you in what you said of Mr. Gaspack?"

"Why, you *did* agree with me, didn't you?" said the other, with a quick glance at him of those confiding eyes.

"But, Miss Martha, did I *say* anything against him?" asked the pastor again.

"Say anything! Why, of course, didn't you? Why, what a ridiculous question!" exclaimed the girl, bursting into a laugh. "Do you suppose that I remember everything you say to me, Mr. Thompson? Of course I think a very, very great deal about it, as becomes a poor little meek parishioner, but then—"

"Really," said the pastor, "but I am in earnest. With your mother, at least, if not with you, what I said, or am supposed to have said to you, is a serious question."

"With my mother?" asked the girl (she had the far-away look in her eyes now). "What has she to do about it?"

"You know perfectly well how much she thinks of Mr. Gaspack," was the answer.

"I should think I did," said the girl (she had the confiding look in her eyes again). "Poor, dear mamma! Why, it's perfectly absurd! You've no idea how she's fascinated by him. But he *is* such an old humbug, isn't he?"

"Now, Miss Martha," said the pastor, with a conscious

warming of his heart that produced a perceptible softening of his tones, "you are trying to get me to commit myself again." He was beginning to think that Mrs. Beaufort's state of mind might not be, after all, so very serious a matter, nor likely to produce any very serious estrangement between himself and the rest of the family.

"And, pray, what if you do commit yourself?" said the young lady. "If I were a man, now, I should not be afraid to commit myself. I wish I *were* a man once."

"Why, what would you do then?" asked the man. He was beginning to feel very much interested.

"Why, I should just say and do everything I wanted to say and do," replied she.

Could this be a hint, designed for him to take? the pastor asked himself. He had often heard, among his bachelor friends, that young ladies were accustomed to give such hints.

"Would you say everything?" he asked.

"Why not?" she said—"for then, you know, I shouldn't be afraid of anybody—of mamma, Miss Inthway, Mr. Gaspack, or anybody else."

"You wouldn't say everything that was in your heart, would you?" asked the other, with a sudden sensation of weakness, as though, in the region of his own heart, some elements of a small Vesuvius had begun to work and were melting away every nerve and muscle in the pro-

cess of their development. In fact, his whole frame felt so limp that it seemed impossible for him to stand up any longer. It was absolutely necessary for him to sit down on the platform, immediately in front of her. As he did so, in his blundering way, he placed his finger accidentally against her little slipper, just protruding from beneath her skirts. That silk conductor sent a thrill through all his frame, like a stroke of electricity. The only soul that still remained in the world to uphold the name of the Dickories began to fear that he was about to lose his senses. Perhaps his comrade thought so too, for she drew her foot in hastily, shoved her chair a little back, and said, with a sort of half laugh:

"You haven't room, Mr. Thompson. Let me give you room. Now, tell me what it was—the thing you had it in your heart to say about Mr. Gaspack?"

"Is she a coquette? Is she flirting with me?" thought the pastor; and these thoughts, it must be confessed, did not lessen the fascination with which he was beginning to surmise the fate to which nothing that he could think of but destiny seemed to be impelling him.

As she had drawn back from him, he thought that he would draw back from her, both in body and in spirit. "Do you think," he asked, "that I said anything last night to warrant you in using my opinion with your mother as an argument against Mr. Gaspack?"

"What do you mean?" she said, stopping her work abruptly, and looking at him with a dazed expression.

"Isn't it better in all cases," he went on, "to let people speak for themselves? Knowing your mother's admiration for Mr. Gaspack, wouldn't it have been better to let *me* tell her, if I didn't like him?—especially as I didn't say anything whatever to you about him?"

"So you think that I've been tattling, do you?" said the girl, blushing deeply, throwing the far-away look into her eyes, and making her fingers fly nervously like an angry bird up and down upon her embroidery.

"I sincerely hope you have not," he answered.

"Why, Mr. Thompson," she said, gradually checking the velocity of her fingers, and restoring the confiding look to her eyes, "didn't you know that that would be the very thing to set her against you?" (The pastor hoped she would keep on talking. If she stopped, he felt sure that, even as far away as she sat, she would hear the violent thumping of his heart.) "And you know we mustn't do that. We must get the man away. Poor Captain Loring, what a time he had of it last night! Such a reception for a stranger to get in our village! You ought to have seen him in the vestibule there with the boys—oh, it was the most comical sight! He was so witty, too. But then it's a real shame, you know."

"Oh, it was from Captain Loring you wanted Mr.

Gaspack to go away?" said the pastor, with a slight suggestion of sarcasm in his tone.

But the girl had not noticed it. "Of course," she answered, "from all of us—and the captain's such a nice man to have about here, you know."

"Yes, I thought you were getting particularly interested in him," said the other, in a tone still more satirical.

"Why, what an idea!" exclaimed the girl, half petulantly, but earnestly. "I have never seen him but four or five times in my life!"

"And how many times," asked the pastor, very well pleased to note her petulance, and revealing his pleasure—"how many times does a young lady need to see a man before she becomes particularly interested in him?"

"Ah, that depends on who it is," answered the young lady, with the most fascinating little shrug of her shoulders, and a flush of her fair face, out of which shot a glance of those confiding eyes that seemed to be thrown at her comrade's very soul, then to be snatched back suddenly, and hid under her drooping eyelids. Had it caught and drawn his soul back with it? For a moment the pastor verily believed that it had; then with a sudden impulse, like that of a dazed or drowning man, who, without knowing why he does so, stretches out his hand for something that may save him, his own hand made a motion toward that little hand at work on the embroidery.

"Miss Martha," said he, "I want you—"

But that sentence was destined never to be finished. With a slight scream of "Why, Mr. Thompson!" the maiden, startled partly by the strange and sudden earnestness that filled the countenance of the man before her, partly by a shadow falling in the pathway just beyond him, sprang to her feet with an impetus that overthrew the chair behind her, and dropped the embroidery work to the floor in front of her—and with the embroidery, alas! the pastor's hand and arm and trunk and face, which in the impulse that had moved him had followed the hand toward its precarious resting-place, and now had, sympathetically, been made partakers of its downfall.

Just at this moment, Mrs. Beaufort's form appeared within the arbor. To say that her daughter's face was as red as became the rising of a sun of romance, or the pastor's as became the setting of one, is to say no more than the reader can imagine for himself. But if some would have thought the scene was ludicrous, Mrs. Beaufort, after her own experience of the morning, was not prepared to recognize its comic features.

"What does this mean?" she said to Martha, sternly. "Is this another result of your coquetting? And you, sir" (turning to the pastor), "have you dared to make advances to my daughter?"

"No, mamma, no," said the girl, who had covered

her face with her hands. "It was all my fault, the whole of it."

"Have you been making proposals to her?" went on Mrs. Beaufort, still more angry after this interruption.

"No, no," the girl replied again. "It was all an accident. He was only talking about Mr. Loring—Captain Loring—and he ought to know that I don't care anything particular about him, and I never will care anything particular about him, never, never, never."

"There," said Mrs. Beaufort, turning to the pastor, "you have your sentence; perhaps it would be wise for you to go."

And the pastor went.

CHAPTER XI.

DISCUSSION CONCERNING DIFFERENT KINDS OF TACKLE, AND CONCLUSIONS THEREFROM.

As Captain Loring was returning from the city, in the afternoon following the morning visit of the pastor that has been described, he looked up from his seat in the railway-car to see Bessie and Martha Beaufort, who had been visiting or shopping somewhere, entering it a few moments before it reached Chartville. The only vacant seats in the car happened to be the one in which he was sitting and another just in front of it, the back of which had been turned over, so that the members of a party who had just left the train could sit face to face. Of course, the young man rose and bowed the ladies into these seats.

Both of them appeared to him to be unusually reserved; and recalling his very interesting encounter with Miss Martha in the vestibule of the church after the attack made upon him by Mr. Gaspack, he attributed the

cause of this reserve solely to Miss Bessie. Her relations to Mr. Gaspack and her consequent disapproval of his own course on the previous evening, as well as of the course of her sister in leaving the church in order to speak to him, had probably had the effect, he thought, not only of estranging Miss Bessie from him, but also of suppressing, while in her presence, any manifestation of friendliness which, otherwise, Miss Martha might have been inclined to show him. He took occasion, therefore, as soon as an opportunity was offered, of explaining what had happened, so as to remove, in a pleasant way, and without blaming even Mr. Gaspack, what he presumed to be Miss Bessie's misapprehensions.

"I suppose," he said, "they're all right about it. I should never have gone into the Sunday-school, anyway."

"You're not going to leave it, then, are you?" asked Bessie, manifesting, for the first time, some real interest in what he was saying.

"Why, yes," said the captain, "of course; as things are, I can't stay."

"No, I'd never go into the school again in my life," said Martha.

"I'm very sorry about it," said Bessie. "Weren't you getting to like the school?"

"Like it! of course I was," answered the captain;

"but what does that matter? A man can't stay where he isn't wanted. And the church isn't mine: it's the people's. And there's no mistaking what they thought of me last night."

"But people may be mistaken," said Bessie. "They haven't had things explained to them. Besides, very likely they don't need any explanations. All such troubles blow over in a few days, you know. You haven't said anything to your boys about leaving, have you?—to Johnny, the barber's son?"

"I don't know. Let me see—why, yes, I think I have."

"That's too bad," said Bessie. "Do you think they'll be there to-night?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said the captain.

"But you'll be there yourself, won't you?" asked she. "You know its only a temperance meeting, open to all, not a Sunday-school."

"I'm not in the habit," said the captain, with a slight manifestation of feeling, "of placing myself under fire twice when—if only because I'm afraid that somebody else who happens to be about may get hit—I don't think it prudent to avail myself of the privilege of firing back."

Bessie blushed so deeply that the captain regretted that he had allowed himself to use such strong language.

"I was only thinking," she remarked, "that there

might be some disturbance, and that possibly you might be able to do something to prevent it."

"I was going to stay away," said the captain, "for the purpose of preventing it."

Martha did not seem to be particularly sorrowful over her sister's discomfiture, for she exclaimed, petulantly: "I think the whole thing is just as hateful as it can be. I'm sure I shan't go near the place; and if I were you, Captain Loring, I wouldn't go either."

"If you think so," thought the captain to himself, "and if you're not going to be there, you may be pretty sure that I'll not be there."

And then he could not help contrasting the difference in the ways in which those two girls regarded him. "Miss Martha," he thought, "has nothing for me but sympathy. Her whole soul is enlisted in my behalf. She is just as indignant—in fact, she is a little more indignant over the insult that I received last night than I am myself. The girl evidently admires me. But Miss Bessie, she just as evidently admires Mr. Gaspack, and so she wishes to defend him from my dislike and from the dislike of the people, and from any disturbance that the boys may be inclined to make in his meeting this evening." Yet he could not help adding, to himself: "What fine tact she uses in doing this! Why, all the way through, she has prevented me from knowing any-

thing, whether favorable or unfavorable, that she thinks of Mr. Gaspack's action, or even that she thinks anything at all about it, or that she even supposes it to have anything whatever to do with my state of mind!"

And the more he thought *about* this fact, the more he thought *of* it, and of her of whom it was true. "By-and-by," he said to his heart, "this girl will bring about a reconciliation between Mr. Gaspack and myself: that is, not a complete reconciliation—I can never respect the man—but one sufficient to enable me to regain a footing with her mother and with the whole family;" and, as he looked at Miss Martha, gratitude came into his heart, in view of Miss Bessie's kind soul, gentle manner, and ready tact.

But I am anticipating. These thoughts had scarcely assumed definite shape in his mind, when they had reached Chartville, and had descended from the car on to the station platform. As they did so, they found there the Rev. Mr. Thompson. As he often came down to the train of an evening to meet his friend, his being there was no surprise to the captain. It was a surprise, however, to see him give a hurried and unusually formal bow to the two ladies, and then to hear him say: "Good-evening, Dick. I suppose you'll want to walk home with the young ladies. I've a little errand up the street. We'll meet, I suppose, at supper."

Of course, Captain Loring would not have thought of doing anything else than walking home by the way of the Beaufort mansion. And, this evening, he felt abundantly repaid for doing so. For some reason, Miss Martha's reserve had vanished completely. Her banter was unusually peppery, and her mood almost hilarious. He was sure that he had never seen her appear so charming.

"That girl," he thought, as he left her—and again he was contrasting her confiding manner with the reserve of her sister—"that girl certainly likes me."

"You never knew her in such good spirits," he said to the pastor, when they met in their rooms, just before supper. "Confound it, what's got into you? Why didn't you go up with us? By Jove, they're a mighty nice family, these Beauforts."

"I'm sure I don't object to your finding them so," said the pastor, with a little smack of bitterness in his tones.

"Look here, Dick," cried the other, "what's the matter with you? What has happened? I thought you had the inside track there."

"Well, if I had," said the pastor, "my game's up now, that's all."

"Come, come, old fellow, no more of your blues," said the captain. "Don't let your fancies get the better of you."

"It's no fancy," replied the other. "I'm only saying what I know."

The pastor evidently did not feel in a communicative mood, and the captain was not one to extort from a friend a reluctant communication. But what he had heard both troubled and—though he was loath to admit it, even to himself—pleased him. He was troubled because his friend was troubled, and he was not entirely sure but that, in some unimaginable manner, his own conduct on the previous evening had been the cause of this trouble. At the same time he was not indifferent to the suggestion that possibly this trouble had arisen from something that had occurred between the pastor and Miss Martha. There was that in the manner of the two when they had met this afternoon on the station platform that seemed to point to this. And if such were the case, why, then the captain was conscious that he should feel very sorry for the pastor, and conscious, too—and conscientious about it—that he would have done anything in his power to save the pastor from the occasion of his sorrow. But, then, there was a good deal of sorrow in the world. One could never remedy the whole of it. One was obliged to take things as he found them. And here was the pastor: how had he found Miss Martha? She evidently had not shared in his feelings. Whatever had occurred had afforded her satisfaction and joy rather than sorrow. This

was evident from her way of acting this afternoon. If so, and if, as seemed likely, there had been any advances on the part of his friend, or if there had been only a quarrel between him and her: under any supposition it was evident that Martha at least had entertained no special regard for the pastor; and if she had not, why, then, thought the captain, "the way is perfectly clear and perfectly honorable for—any one else who may wish to obtain her favor."

And, upon this small glimmer of hope for himself, the captain kept blowing the fumes of his cigar that evening for hours and hours, until it had been fanned and fanned so as to fill the whole horizon of his future. Through the dim wreaths of the smoke he saw before him the outlines of a home. How beautiful it seemed! And in that home he saw that sweet, sweet face, with its confiding eyes, and now it was multiplied and multiplied. Ah! foolish young man, who never yet had had experience of a real home, what glorious visions did he not see!

The spells in which he felt himself bound were not broken apart till later in the evening, when he heard strange noises issuing from the lecture-room of the church, which was just across the yard from the house in which he was lodging. Then he recalled what Miss Bessie ("What a confoundedly wise girl she is!" he

thought to himself) had said about a possible disturbance, and about the possibility of his being able to do something toward quieting it. So he rose and listened, and he heard what induced him to draw on, much more quickly than usual, his boots and coat and cap.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW AN ENTERPRISING FISHER WAS CAPSIZED.

To understand the reason of the noises mentioned at the close of the preceding chapter, we must go back a little in our story.

In accordance with her intention declared to the captain, Martha Beaufort had remained at home this evening. So had Mrs. Beaufort. The excitement of the morning probably had proved too great a strain upon the sensibilities of both of them to allow of their doing otherwise. Only Bessie sat with Mr. Gaspack in the Beaufort carriage when it drove up to the church-steps but a single minute before the hour announced for the opening of the services.

On entering the room, Mr. Gaspack looked as though he thought that the hour of his greatest triumph had arrived. Every seat was filled, and the audience appeared to be composed almost exclusively of men and boys of the lower classes, the very ones that his efforts had been

designed especially to reach. As one could see no empty benches anywhere, some of the men began to rise and offer their places to Miss Bessie and a few more ladies who had arrived at the same time with her. But the pastor begged them all to keep their seats; and he and the sexton and two other young men went somewhere else in the building, and brought from there two settees, and, carrying them down the aisle above the heads of the people, placed them on the little platform where the desk was. These were all that the platform would hold, but they were enough to accommodate the ladies; and when the latter had been escorted up to them, and had taken their seats upon them, facing the audience, the utterances of "the boys" conveyed abundant information of the degree in which they had all agreed that the general appearance of the room had been improved.

As usual, after the preliminary exercises, Mr. Gaspack rose to give his address. It has been intimated that this gentleman was not on every occasion given to being discreet. It has been intimated also that the main thing that prevented him from being so was his own extravagant estimate of the value of his own opinions. Why should he refrain from ventilating opinions so important for the world to know, whenever he got a chance to do so, whether or not they were connected closely with the subject that he had to present, or whether or not they

were likely to prove influential with the audience to whom they were to be presented? On Sunday evening, as we have found, he had gone out of his way to enlighten those before him by exhibiting to them his views on the subject of theology; on Monday evening he had shown up his views upon church polity; and on the evening that we are now considering he was moved to continue the good work that he had begun by making a revelation to them of his views—and very decided views they were—on the subject of their State politics.

Unfortunately, a rumor, started in all probability by his enemies in the bar-rooms, who wished to injure his influence as a reformer, had been circulating through the village during the day—in fact, during two or three days—that Mr. Gaspack, who lived in an adjoining town, but in the same district as Chartville, was anxious, in connection with an ensuing election, to obtain the "temperance" nomination for the Legislature. As soon, therefore, as he began to touch on politics, many in the audience—even those who had previously believed this report to be a slander—began to think that it might possibly be true; and, as most of them were strong adherents of existing parties, and did not sympathize with the temperance movement as a political measure, they could not resist the idea that suggested itself, that this man's interest in politics, so vehemently paraded before them, was largely

a matter of self-interest. Moreover, with this idea once in their minds, when they recalled the similar vehemence that he had exhibited on previous occasions in behalf of doctrinal and practical religion, they could not avoid a suggestion that that too might be attributable to similar motives. In fact, even those who had agreed most heartily with the expressions of his religious views, now that they had come to find him expressing certain views with reference to politics with which they did not agree—even those who had derived the most inspiring sort of spiritual satisfaction from his method of consigning every one else in the room except themselves to the infernal regions, now that they had come to find that he was ready to consign themselves also to the same—began to question very seriously whether, viewed either as a politician, a religionist, or a reformer, the man before them was not a charlatan and a hypocrite, whether his utterances were entitled to any more consideration than the "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal," to which, as some of them began to recall now, St. Paul compares all expressions that are devoid of charity.

Accordingly, at the conclusion of Mr. Gaspack's speech, such thoughts as these that had instinctively sprung up in the minds of many, and been conveyed through vigorous whisperings to the minds of many more who were about them, had served to alienate from

him the sympathy of fully two-thirds of those present. The audience had lost confidence in the reformer, and from this fact alone were beginning to surmise that Captain Loring and the pastor (if, indeed, the opinions of these gentlemen had been correctly reported to them) had been right in their estimate of him.

As will be seen, this state of feeling furnished an admirable preparation for the manner in which "the boys," just at this moment, were destined to break in upon the regularity of the proceedings. No sooner had Mr. Gaspack taken his seat than they began to call out, "Barber Joe! Barber Joe! Barber Joe!"

Every one could perceive that no further speeches could take place in the meeting until Joe the barber, who was present, and who, although very illiterate, was an extremely popular man in his way, especially with his own set, had made some sort of a response to this call. So the pastor, who had risen for another purpose, after a moment's hesitation, turned to the barber, and, with one of his habitual bows and a wave of the hand, signified his desire to yield the floor to him. This brought Joe to his feet and started some applause, which, every now and then throughout his speech, was started anew; but as often as it began, it would stop when the people would catch sight of the pastor shaking his hand at them, to indicate that the applause was out of order.

"I told some of the boys at the corner grocery this mornin'," said Joe, "how I wa'n't afraid to 'spress my sentiments at the meetin' here to-night. I s'pose that's why that they're callin' on me; I s'pose that's why that they're givin' me a chance. What I says to 'em this mornin' was this: 'I don't want,' says I, 'to say nothin' agin nobody; but I don't want,' says I, 'nobody to say nothin' agin nobody else.' An' the way things has been said agin a man as I knows to be a good man here, last night, hadn't ought to go on without a word from a man as knows what that man is—I mean the man as was spoken aginst last night, Captain Loring. He ain't here to-night. Why ain't he here? Ain't he a temp'rance man? How many of you ever see him drunk, or drinkin' anythin' except tea or coffee? and everybody knows they is always good in digestin'. Why ain't he a temp'rance man? Must a temp'rance man always be goin' about like this feller here" (pointing at Mr. Gaspack), "a-blackguardin' and a-swearin' and a-lyin', too, about everybody as don't think as he does? And he says he ain't no Christian, either." (*Voice:* "Who says it?") "This feller as has been blowin' us all up here. He says the captain ain't no Christian. Ain't no Christian? Wall, I ain't this church, an' p'r'aps I don't know what a Christian is. But I know this much: he's the only man as ever got my boy Johnny to go to Sunday-school—an' he

likes it, too—don't you, Johnny?" And the audience laughed to see Johnny's head (the boy was standing near the pulpit) pop down out of sight behind the convenient form of a portly member of Chartville society, who occupied the seat in front of him.

"You may ask my old woman, then," Joe went on to say, at which the head of this estimable authority, who was sitting at his side, moved downward as rapidly and vigorously as her son's had done. For a moment it really seemed as though neither son nor wife was to give countenance to the father and husband's words. But, fortunately for the reputation of the family, the mother was destined ultimately to evince the courage that the occasion demanded. Modesty did not overcome her completely. Her head soon began to return to its former and normal position, after which, as though intent to do penance for its momentary dereliction, or because the muscles of the back and neck had been fatally limbered by its first violent declination, it continued to keep up an incessant downward and upward movement, like the nodding Chinaman in a crockery store, all through the remainder of her husband's speech. It was really a tender tribute to the harmony of their married life, or to the completeness of her husband's discipline, the way that henceforth every word that he uttered seemed to meet with her approval.

"Yes," said Joe, "an' he's the only man in this town, too, as has ever asked me, in a civil way, to come to church here. He's the only man as has ever asked my old woman to come to church, either; and he's the only man as could ever git us to come to church. And if he ain't a Christian, feller-citizens, why I say it's a great deal worse off for the church, under them circumstances, than it is for him. An' if you folks here is a-thinkin', if this feller here as has been talkin' politics to-night, and religion last night—and no one don't know how many things as he don't know about—if you folks is a-thinkin', and this feller's a-thinkin', that we're goin' to swallow him down whole and throw up the captain, 'cause he don't like him, why all I've got to say is, that he's altogether too big a mouthful."

And with this strain upon his imagination in order to bring out a climax worthy of the occasion, the barber sank into his seat in a state of exhaustion, while all the rest of the room, upon whom the mantle of eloquence that had dropped from his lifeless figure seemed to have fallen, began—the whole of them, as it appeared to the pastor—to rise and to wish to speak, at once.

But Mr. Gaspack was a man who was accustomed to pride himself upon being equal to any emergency. As soon as the barber had finished, therefore, without giving the pastor a chance even to smooth over the difficulty, as

probably it was not too late yet to do, he sprang up intent to overwhelm his adversary with the gush of his abundant rhetoric. But, alas for Mr. Gaspack! in his eagerness to rise, he had upset the chair in which he had been sitting, and which had been rendered top-heavy by his enormous overcoat resting on its back. The chair and overcoat together fell to the floor, and, as they fell, an ominous crash was heard. Could it have been, as some surmised, the sound of a breaking bottle? Whatever Mr. Gaspack may have thought or known about it, he addressed himself boldly to the rescue of his fallen garment. He stooped down to lift it up. As it rose from the floor, a strange liquid was seen dripping from one of its pockets, and an odor, recalling unmistakably the most characteristic and reprehensible reminiscences of a bar-room, permeated to every corner of Chartville church lecture-room.

Then ensued a scene that defies description: hissing and stamping and jeering and pushing, and cries of "Tar and feather him!" and "Ride him on a rail!" and a general rush toward the platform, as if there had really been a serious intention to carry out some such fiendish purpose. It was of no avail for Mr. Gaspack to cry out, "The bottle was not mine!" No one now would heed him, or believe a word that he might utter. As has been said, the man had already lost his reputation.

In the back part of the room were a few rough characters who had been brought to the meeting while under the influence of liquor. Their friends had hoped that, although in this condition, they might receive some benefit there. Up to this time, they had kept themselves, or been kept by others, comparatively quiet. But now that all around them were giving way to excitement, they became simply furious. As the crowd immediately in front of Mr. Gaspack was too dense to allow of their reaching him, they began to take from their pockets their pipes, tobacco—anything that came to hand—and to fling these at the object of the popular detestation.

As for the reformer himself, he had begun, before this, to lose courage; but when he saw these missiles coming, what, of all things, should he do but—in the absence of any rear door in the building through which to escape—drop down and back behind the settees which were filled with the ladies, as if, forsooth, the risk of hitting them would deter a set of half-intoxicated and excited boys and rowdies from aiming their missiles in that direction!

"You cowardly fool," cried the pastor, with a force of language that no one in the congregation ever afterward found fault with him for using, "come out of there!" and amid a shower of missiles, as it seemed, he literally dragged and tumbled the large man back to the other side of the platform again.

This action of the pastor proved to be the most efficient means that could have been devised of bringing order out of that confusion. The crowd had already ceased their pelting when, with his forehead bleeding where it had been struck, he turned to the crowd, and, in a voice of authority, commanded them to be quiet. Then he told them to recall that there had been no proof whatever that the broken bottle had belonged to Mr. Gaspack—there had been only proof that somebody—and possibly it had been a trick—had put the bottle into Mr. Gaspack's pocket. And he told them, in addition, that as for using any violence with Mr. Gaspack, who was now his guest, or laying even a finger on him, that should not be done so long as he himself had life or strength left in his body with which to prevent it.

"And in that, Dick, I'll stand by you," cried Captain Loring, as he appeared there, pushing up the aisle to take his stand beside the pastor.

Of course, the tide had turned completely now, and the four or five rowdies who, with a few almost irresponsible boys who had joined in with them, were the only ones to blame for the trouble, found themselves in such ill-favor that, if not forced out of the room by their more sober friends, they were glad to disappear from the building as quietly as possible.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW AN INEXPERIENCED FISHER RESCUED ONE OF THE VICTIMS.

MEANTIME, a new sensation had arrested Captain Loring's attention. It was among the ladies. One of them appeared to have fainted; and the rest had gathered around her. A glance in that direction revealed to the captain the fact that the one who had fainted was Bessie Beaufort, and a stream of blood that trickled down her pale face pointed to a cause more serious than the mere excitement.

"We must get her to the fresh air," he cried, pushing aside the ladies who were bending over her; and taking only the precaution to snatch a smelling-bottle from one of them, he had lifted the girl in his strong arms, as he might have lifted a child, and was carrying her down the aisle past the crowd that with difficulty gave way before him, through the vestibule, and out upon the lawn. As he had left the room, he had looked behind

him, expecting to see some of the ladies following him. But, either because they had stopped to get their wrappings, or had been unable or too timid to work their way through the crowd, he found himself followed by only a few men and boys.

He decided that he must take the girl across the lawn to the house where he was staying, and obtain the help of his landlady. And this he started out to do, dispatching on different errands, as he went along, three of the boys who were at his heels—one to the house whither he was going, to summon its landlady; one for the physician, and one to tell Mrs. Beaufort's coachman, who had driven Miss Bessie to the church, to hurry home as rapidly as possible, and fetch from there some person to assist him. At the door of the house, he told the other men that he could do without them, and then carried his burden into his own room, expecting to meet in it his landlady, whom he had summoned. But the boy who had been sent for her came back to say that the house was entirely empty. There was but one thing left for him to do then. Quickly dispatching the boy back to the church for the other women who were there, the man, without a moment's hesitation, as tenderly as if she had been his own little child, and as reverentially as if she had been his own mother, laid the girl upon his bed before the open window, freed her of what could interfere with the full ac-

tion of her lungs, washed the blood from her forehead, bathed her brow, her lips, her hands, her pulses.

It may have been one minute, it may have been ten, before the women from the church and the physician came to his assistance. The captain never could reconcile with his own experience the stories that they had to tell of the haste that they had used in doing so. And why should he have been able to reconcile them? Is the amount of one's experience ever measured by the time that it occupies? There is many a man who, in the midst of the most sorrowful surroundings, has believed constantly in the possibility of happiness for himself, not only in this life, but through all eternity, whose ground of belief has all been revealed to his experience in a moment as brief as that in which Captain Loring felt the burden of Bessie Beaufort's body between his arms, and of her whole earthly existence upon his mind. Ah! man, man, man, you think that you were born to struggle; you enter upon the battle of life; you fight with others; you conquer them; you feel the crown of victory upon your brow; you hear the cheers with which the people welcome it; and yet you know that all these ends may be attained, and bring no satisfaction with them, bring no proof to your soul that you have achieved a single thing that is worthy of your manhood. But, by-and-by, in a place where you expect it least, a day may come when you have

checked your onward course to be the staff of some weak, aged form just tottering on the borders of the grave; when you have stooped to lift some sick and suffering child up from the pathway where the world had trodden on it; when you have knelt to offer all the help that you could render to some frail and fainting human being, often too inanimate even to solicit your assistance. Then, when the health and strength and life of another depend on your exertions, then, perhaps, you realize at last the reason why you were born to struggle, and were given the sinews and the spirit of a man; then you know that you were made to be this life's protector; then you learn just how it is that you may represent and be a son of God; then, too, the inspiration and the bliss of the Divine One fill and thrill you through and through.

And this, as often happens, no matter what may be the object of your care. But if that be in itself the embodiment of sweetness, grace, and beauty, all the more divine and blissful is the consciousness that comes then of the worth of your high calling. As the captain bent above those pale and delicate features, outlined there against the white of that same pillow where his own face —and to think it seemed to suggest profanation—had so often rested; as he bathed the colorless lips, with an ever-rising prayer that Heaven would not be cruel enough to drain the dear, warm life from them forever; as he

watched those drooping eyelids, and the finely moulded lips, with an ever-intenser wish that they would open, see, and speak to him—did it require a great while, spent in such a manner, think you, to awaken in a bachelor like him an interest, personal and peculiar, in the object of his thoughts? Before this, we have seen that he had found that Bessie Beaufort had a mind and soul, had judgment, tact, and kindliness. Now he had found that she had more than these, that she had a body full of human liability to accident and suffering, demanding from himself the utmost exercise of help and sympathy.

And no man ever loved a woman yet till he had found out that; and no man ever found out that, with reference to a woman whom his eyes admired and mind respected, without surmising for a moment what that saying means, that "every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God," and without a prayer, too, that in some way this experience of a moment might be rendered permanent, because, while it continues, he believes with all his heart that "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

CHAPTER XIV.

TO CATCH A LARGER SCHOOL OF FISH, IT IS DECIDED TO USE A DIFFERENT KIND OF NET.

A FEW moments after the physician and the women from the church, for whom the captain had sent, had made their appearance, his charge began to revive. But she was still too weak, from loss of blood and from nervous prostration, for them to think of having her taken home, and, accordingly, arrangements were made at once to keep her where she was until the following day.

Before long, Mr. Gaspack and the pastor had also arrived; and a moment later Mrs. Beaufort and Martha. Both the latter, upon seeing the condition of things, avowed their intention of remaining in the house until they could take the invalid home with them.

As the captain and the pastor occupied adjoining rooms, the two, as was natural, insisted upon vacating them in order to accommodate the ladies. But the ladies, like most of their sex in emergencies like this, declared it to be their purpose to sit up, or if, indeed,

they desired any sleep, they assured the young gentlemen that they could get all that they needed in a rocking-chair or on the lounge.

This led to a good deal of altercation of a pleasant kind, in connection with which, together with various arrangements and explanations that had to be made after the young men had finally gained their point, not a little conversation was necessitated between the pastor and the two Beauforts, mother and daughter.

At first, Mr. Thompson had thought that he would not converse with them at all, that he would manage matters so that all the talking should be done by the captain. But of course in the circumstances, especially as the captain did not and could not understand the drift of such manœuvring, this plan could not be carried out. After a little, the pastor found himself obliged to accept the situation as it was, and, before long, was agreeably surprised to find also that, with exception of a little conscious endeavor to be unusually polite, he was feeling almost as much at home with the ladies as if he had never made them that unfortunate morning visit. Indeed, he thought that he had never seen Mrs. Beaufort so gracious or Miss Martha so charming. "They have been obliged by circumstances," he thought, "to accept of my hospitality, and they have made up their minds that they must show their appreciation of it." But, if he had heard the short

but graphic account of what had happened at the lecture-room, that had come from the lips of Thomas, their coachman, when he was bringing them to the assistance of Miss Bessie, the pastor might have come to a conclusion more flattering to himself.

As it was, he trusted that now Mrs. Beaufort would soon find out that he had been right in what he had said to her about Mr. Gaspack's methods. At present, however, he had no reason to believe that she had done so. But, so far as any further inferences really satisfactory to himself personally could be drawn from the manner of that lady toward him, he felt that, after what had occurred in the morning, it would be worse than folly for him to entertain them. He only hoped to continue still to be a friend of the family. The possibility of becoming connected with it by ties more intimate he had shut out of his thoughts, as he conceived, forever.

So, with a throbbing heart and a heaving breast, that kept him awake throughout the entire night, and—to tell the truth—dashed up not a few tears to his eyes, he considered fully, and tried to consider calmly, all the many signs of growing intimacy that his willing eyes could detect in the conduct of the captain and Miss Martha. "Well, well," he thought, "if some men can't be happy, others can; thank God for that!"

And so the night passed by, and the morning came,

and with it Mr. Gaspack, driven from the Beaufort mansion, hidden well from the observation of the village "boys," in the back seat of the carriage. The captain and the pastor both observed that Mrs. Beaufort's manner toward this gentleman was unusually formal; but any attempt to discover something similar in the bearing of Miss Bessie, now entering rapidly upon a state of convalescence, failed.

It was agreed, of course, upon all hands, that after the unfortunate accident of the previous evening, after the "despicable trick" which, as Mr. Gaspack was careful to reiterate, "had been perpetrated upon him," it would scarcely be expedient for this gentleman to continue his services in the village just at present. This clause, "just at present," was put in by the pastor, as an offset to an expression on Mr. Gaspack's countenance when the subject was first broached, which seemed to indicate—though it might not have done so—a desire, on the part of the reformer, to keep on in his work, notwithstanding the opposition to him

After Mr. Gaspack had taken his departure for the railway station, and the captain and the pastor were alone in their room for a few moments—"Will," said the latter, "these services have been announced to continue, and they've got to continue. You must come in to-night, and help me."

"I!" exclaimed the captain, "what an idea! Why, I'm not a temperance man. What can I do?"

"You're not an intemperance man, are you?" said his friend.

"Well, that's a way of putting it, certainly."

"It's the true way, isn't it?" asked his friend. "You know, 'he that is not against us, is for us.'"

"But, then, you see," said the captain, "if a fellow wants to take a glass of beer now and then—a German, for instance—I really can't find it in my heart to think he's doing anything very wrong."

"But it's easy enough to think that those boys, loafing and drinking in the bar-rooms every day, are doing something wrong, isn't it?"

"Of course, you know; but that's a different thing. The grounds are different. Now, there's Mr. Gaspack—"

"Ah! but just here," said the pastor, "be good enough to remember that Mr. Gaspack is not an ideal reformer or man—not mine, and, I strongly suspect, not the ideal man either of Chartville church or village."

"No, but who is?"

"Well, to tell the truth, just at this moment I think that the one that can most completely fit that niche is Captain Loring. This is the reason why I want you to help me to-night, Will."

"Humph!" said the captain. "If I've escaped from

Mr. Gaspack's attack as fortunately as you seem to think I have—no thanks to me, but to his stupidity—that's no reason why I should step into the same boots that have already slipped up with him, is it? By Jove! you wouldn't press into your service another hypocrite, and, for all that I can see, as bad a one as he—would you?"

"There's no need of any good man's being a hypocrite in order to do good, Will. There's enough truth to tell to keep one's tongue at work. One needn't waste its strength on falsehood."

"But I don't believe," protested the captain, "in all this stuff that your reformers talk about. I don't believe that Jesus in Cana made jelly or fresh grape-juice. He made wine, or that old fellow wouldn't have said he'd kept the good wine till the end of the feast. I don't believe that these folks who have traveled in France and Italy and Germany lie when they say that, where people have plenty of light, pure wines and beers, they have very few drunkards. I don't—"

"Oh, well, Will, but now we've got to deal with our own country. Don't you think that we've plenty of whiskey and gin, and wine too, for that matter, that's pretty strong even before it's adulterated; and that the majority of people would do a good deal better if they'd let it alone?"

"Why, of course, everybody knows that; but—"

"Very well, then," said the pastor, "if you want to make a successful speech, the most important thing to do is to say what everybody knows. It's the best way—don't you see?—of flattering your audience's intelligence."

"But, Dick," his friend went on, "I can't help thinking that the very worst thing of all in this drinking question is something that your reformers, so far as I know, never touch. I mean that senseless, good-for-nothing custom of treating—making a man drink when he doesn't want to drink because some one asks him to do so; or because he happens to meet some one who has treated him in the past, and whom he feels that he ought to treat back; and making him drink more than he ought because the whole company in the bar-room, each of them, has to treat all around; and making him drink out of meal-hours when there's nothing for the stuff to operate on but the empty coats of the stomach, where, of course, it creates irritation and an unnatural craving for more of the same thing. Now, in Germany, they say, if a man asks you to take a glass of beer with him, he expects you to pay for your own beer, and all these evils are prevented."

"Well, come in and tell the people so to-night," said the pastor, with a laugh; "that alone would make a speech in itself."

But just then they were called into the next room.

The carriage had returned from the railroad station, and all the Beauforts, Bessie included, were about to leave them.

"He's been trying to get me into Mr. Gaspack's boots to-night," said the captain, as the two entered the room together.

"I'm afraid," said Martha, with a little laugh and a queer little shrug of her shoulders, "that you're not a great enough man to fill them."

"What's that?" asked Bessie.

"Oh, nothing," answered the captain; "only Dick wants me to help him—to make a speech, or something of that sort, to-night at the meeting."

"And aren't you going to do it?" she asked again.

"Why, how can I?" he said.

"Just as well as not," said the pastor. "He's been giving me, in the other room, ideas enough for the schedule of a speech two hours long, any one of which, if carried out, would make our town about ten times more sober than it is at present."

"Well," said the captain, "if that were the object—"

"It's object enough at any rate," put in Bessie, laughing, "and you've so much influence—you've done so well with the boys—"

"I thought they came to another conclusion the other evening," said the captain.

"It wasn't the *conclusion*, was it?" remarked Bessie, casting her eyes downward—"*that* came, didn't it, *last* evening?"

"If *your* conclusion came then," said the captain, in a fervent undertone, as he bent down to escort her to the carriage—he was thinking of her engagement to Mr. Gaspack—"I shall abide by it."

And that evening the captain took part in the exercises at the church, and so, too, on subsequent evenings; and in the large reformatory society, founded, as he was wont to claim, on rational principles, that he and the pastor were instrumental in starting, with its reading-rooms bowling alley, and gymnasium open all day and almost every night, and its weekly literary and social meetings and lectures—all that Miss Bessie Beaufort had had to say about his influence with "the boys" was abundantly verified.

CHAPTER XV.

A SUNSET ON THE FISHING-GROUNDS.

One afternoon, as the captain was returning from his law-lectures, his landlady met him at her door to tell him that she had received two messages from the barber, requesting the pastor and himself to come to his house immediately, and visit his son, Johnny. The boy had been in the factory during the morning, and while there had been accidentally pushed by one of his comrades against a large leather strap; and, before he could get away from it, the strap had dragged him to one of the great wheels, and crushed under it one of his limbs. It was feared that the boy would die. The pastor, she went on to say, had gone to the city, and probably would not return till late in the evening, possibly not until the following day.

The captain's heart was in his throat at once. He had begun to love this boy, and, although he had become accustomed to scenes of suffering through witnessing

them on the battle-field, it made the tears come into his eyes to think of his little friend made a cripple for life, perhaps, if not already in a dying condition. Without stopping in his room any longer than was necessary to snatch up a Bible, which, as his eye fell upon it, he had a vague impression that he ought, in the circumstances, to carry with him, he hurried away to obey the summons.

When he reached the barber's house, he found a large number of the neighbors collected about it, and still more of them, as it seemed to him, in its hall, and crowding into the very room in which the poor boy was lying. Both through looks and words, moreover—in a way the inconsiderate heartlessness of which gave almost as great a shock to the captain's feelings as the pale face that he had come to visit—they were giving exceedingly pointed intimations of what they considered to be the sufferer's condition.

"They say I've got to die, captain—they say I've got to die," said the latter, moaning feebly, as with wide, wild eyes he looked up to welcome the new-comer.

The captain took the boy's hand and pressed it gently. He felt that he could never talk to him as he should talk, and that the boy would never be prepared to listen to him as he should listen, in such a stifling air or before so many eyes.

"Johnny and I are old friends," he said, gazing

quietly around on those who were filling the apartment. "I rather think he wants to see me alone."

"Yes, yes, sir," came from the head on the pillow.

So the room was cleared, though—I am sorry to say it—not without a good deal of disappointment manifested on the faces and in the phrases of those who had left it. Forsooth, they would "have liked to hear so what the captain would have to say; they didn't see why he needed to be so very particular about things." And, thinking thus, the self-same souls that a moment before had been overflowing with self-complacency to think how they had left their household cares in order to come and sympathize with their neighbors, were just as ready now—perhaps a great deal more ready—to overflow with regret that they had done so. Had they not failed to be rewarded as they might have been? When again should they get a chance to see a poor boy die, who had been crushed by the factory wheels? When again to hear what a captain just out of the army, who, in place of a minister, had come to visit the boy, would have to say to him? Alas for the fickleness and feebleness of human nature!

Meantime the captain, from a few hurried whispers of the father, who sat by the bedside looking as though his final hope had fled, had learned that the opinions expressed with reference to the boy's condition by the neighbors who had just left the room were only too well found-

ed. The boy was dying. The physician had no longer any hope of saving him. "An' he's been a-gettin' so anxious-like to see you, sir," said the barber. "He kind o' seems to think as though you could help him, sir."

"I don't want to die," murmured the boy, "and they say I've got to."

"But, Johnny," said the captain, trying hard to keep back his tears and to steady his voice, and equally hard to express the religious truths that the circumstances seemed imperatively to demand, "you're not going out of God's hands, you know. He owns this world, and he'll own every world, wherever you go."

"But God don't like me," moaned the boy, "I'm bad."

"Yes, he's been a-thinkin' o' that," said the father, "an' he's been a-wantin' to tell you how as he's the one as put the bottle into that there man Gaspack's pocket. He was a-tellin' me on it this mornin'. The boys hooked the bottle from old Cooley. Old Cooley 's an old drunken fellow, you know; and then Johnny, why, he puts it into the overcoat in the pulpit. Then it broke, you see. And Johnny, he didn't mean to have it break, an' so he was kind o' shamed and frightened at the trick, an' didn't tell anybody about it till this mornin'."

"If you feel so badly about it, Johnny," said the captain, "if you feel that you have done wrong to Mr. Gas-

pack, why, I'll tell him of it; and, if you want to have me, I'll tell the other people of it too. I'll tell them it was all meant for a joke, and that it was all a mistake to have the bottle break; and then they won't think so badly of Mr. Gaspack; and he won't feel so badly. We'll make it all right again."

"Will you?" said the boy, smiling. But in a moment his sad expression had come back again. "I'm bad besides," he said.

"We're all bad sometimes, Johnny," answered the captain. "Don't you know what I was reading to you last Sunday, how the Bible says 'we have all sinned,' and how Jesus Christ came to save us for that very reason, and how good and kind he was; how willing he was to forgive men for their sins, and to die for their sins; and don't you remember how I told you that, in doing all this, he was the image, the likeness of God, so that if we wanted to know what God is, we must think of what Christ was? You wouldn't be afraid of Christ, would you, who took those little children in his arms, and healed all those sick people, and went and took his meals with all those poor sinners, whom the rich men wouldn't have anything to do with?"

"Was he like you?" asked the boy.

At that question, every nerve in the captain's body seemed to tremble. Then, with a flash of meaning that

appeared to him as authoritative as a revelation direct from divinity, there came into his head the full significance of the words uttered, in substance, once to St. Peter, once to all the assembled apostles; but once, too, in a general address, the application of which was limited to no class: "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." He seemed to understand now how it is that human love may represent on earth and accomplish the results of divine love. No priest administering extreme unction ever felt more divinely ordained to remit sins than he did at this moment.

"Jesus Christ was a great deal better than I, Johnny," he said, "more gentle, more ready to forgive and love," and, opening his Bible, he began to read such passages as he supposed would commend themselves to the boy's understanding.

But, after a time, that pale little face appeared to be growing weary of its lesson. "Johnny," he said, "would you like to pray with me?"

"Yes, sir—yes, sir," came in feeble whispers from the pillow.

And then this man knelt down beside that bed to pray, for the first time, in all his mature life, aloud. No matter what he prayed. The words were not so much. God looks upon the heart; and now his heart was full; for in it seemed to rest the whole accumulating

weight of the suffering and the yearning of that sad, small, helpless human frame before him. He felt as if his soul were lifting up the whole of it with every breath and heart-beat.

And let us believe that, all the time that he was praying, within that dying boy, a new-born consciousness of living was beginning to unfold; let us believe this, though the self-same influence that was moving it so gently was striking, with a force as fierce as tempests when they shake the driving rain off from the swaying oaks, against the kneeling, trembling, weeping forms of the sorrowing father and mother of the child, who held their faces in their hands on either side of the one whose voice was leading them in prayer. Poor parents, it was well, perhaps, that the storm should rage, and that their hopes, like dead, dry leaves, should fall about them. Had they not reached the autumn-time of life? They were both advanced in years. No other child would now be born to them. With Johnny, all the sunshine and the promise of their days were soon to go forever. At last, the captain's prayer had ended. He bent his head above the pillow.

"You can trust in Jesus, can't you, Johnny? You can love him, can't you? You will know him when you see him in the other world?"

"Yes, . . I shall . . know him," whispered Johnny, gently, "for . . . . he'll be . . . . like . . . . . you." And

the small voice died away, and the father and the mother kissed their boy. His eye looked back his thanks to them, he tried to smile, and then they knew that they had a boy no longer.

. . . . . .

As the prayer at the bedside, just before the boy had passed away, had ended, some one had entered the bedchamber, but very softly. When all was over, and the captain had lifted up his eyes, he saw, standing there at the door, evidently in the same attitude in which she had opened it, Bessie Beaufort. "Pardon me," she said, when she had found an opportunity. "Johnny had sent for me. They said he wished to see me—to say something of that accident, that evening, in the church; and the neighbor who appeared to have charge here would insist upon my coming to the door, and then she opened it the moment you had ceased to speak. I didn't know the poor boy was so near his end."

"Yes," said the captain, sadly; "it's all over with him now."

"It might have been," said Bessie, "but I can't believe it. See the smile upon his face—and it all came from thinking what he never would have thought of, if he hadn't been to our Sunday-school."

"And he never would 'a' staid there," said the father of the boy, "but for the captain."

"And *I* never should have been or staid there," said the captain, with a slight wave of his hand in the direction of Bessie, and with a vain attempt to keep back his emotion, "but for her."

And, leaving Bessie to console the barber and his wife, as he felt that she knew so much better how to do than he, he walked back slowly to his boarding-house.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FEW CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS WITH REFERENCE TO SOME SUCCESSFUL FISHERS.

For several weeks and months, the physical frame of the head of Chartville church had been becoming more attenuated, and his nervous system more emphatic in its manifestations. The French have a saying to the effect that mind tends to spirit. Perhaps the reason of this change in the pastor, which all could notice, was due to the greater amount of mental ammunition which, as all could also notice, he was using in his endeavors to increase the spiritual effectiveness of his sermons. Possibly, too, the greater depth of experience that these same sermons were beginning to evince—that undertone of sadness in view of the world as it is, and of aspiration in view of the world as it should be—was owing to a similar expenditure of his mind's resources. But if one had been enabled to read the pastor's thoughts, he might

have found some reason for considering such a view not wholly comprehensive of the facts. The truth is that, behind the veil that hid these thoughts from a world that had no business to discover them, a face appeared that everywhere, no matter what he might be doing, evermore was haunting him. "Why is it," he would often ask himself, "that I can never shake the remembrance of her off?"

Yet, all the while that he was trying to accomplish this result, from the very effort that his mind and soul had made, and were making constantly, to get away from this remembrance, both were growing day by day, in power and influence. Not only were his sermons now becoming more acceptable, but so was he himself. Since Mr. Gaspack's sudden fall in popular esteem, and Captain Loring's just as sudden rise, and the success attending the society to reform the neighborhood, the people had been forced to admit the pastor's worth and wisdom. Even Mrs. Beaufort had acknowledged, time and time again, that once she had formed a wrong impression of him; in short, the mine of mischief that his diplomatic tendencies of mind had fired on the night of that church-festival, and but for which the reader would have saved the eyesight wasted on this story, had now exploded its remotest puff of smoke, and all, once more, was peace and sunshine.

But the pastor was not happy. Not that he was really jealous of his friend the captain, whose visits to the Beaufort mansion were becoming, week by week, more frequent, and, as any tyro could have seen, more interesting. The pastor was above such feelings. He sincerely wished to have his friend as fortunate as Providence could make him. But if only things could have turned out otherwise in some way, or if only he himself could have shaken aside the fancy that he had had for Martha Beaufort, life, he thought, would not have seemed so little worth the living.

What the captain said or did on these occasions when he went to see the Beauforts the pastor never was informed. He avoided all allusion to the family. And only now and then, when Will would return in a fit of indignation or disgust because in his visit he had met with Mr. Gaspack, who seemed to produce upon him about the same effect as a red scarf on a Spanish bull, was there any mention even of the place in which the evening had been spent.

Nevertheless the pastor understood the matter thoroughly, he thought. He knew which way the captain's feet were wont to turn in the evenings when he left his room. He recognized the penmanship upon the little notes that, every few days, lay upon the captain's table. He did not need to be informed of the reason why the

captain seemed reserved with reference to his afternoon croquet and twilight entertainments. To be sure, once or twice, he himself had called at the Beaufort mansion. But then it had been his duty. He once or twice had spoken—at some length, too—with Miss Martha Beaufort, when he had met her in the street. But, notwithstanding this, he felt assured, and had resolved to bear it like a man, that there could be nothing further for him in the Beaufort family till, by-and-by, perhaps he should receive some wedding-fees from there—a large one, probably, from Captain Loring, and a very, very small one, possibly, from Mr. Gaspack.

One day, however, when he knew that the captain was to sup at the Beauforts', he started up in haste from the last edition of the evening paper that had just been brought him, and began to make a hurried toilet. Could it be that he was about to follow the captain there? These actions certainly recalled those former days in which he was wont to visit where the captain now had gone. He was, indeed, about to follow him. This last edition of the paper had contained a dispatch stating that in the political convention then in session in an adjacent town, after several hours of balloting for a candidate for the Legislature at the ensuing State election, the name of Captain William Loring had been suddenly brought forward; and that, by a fusion of the "temperance

men" and the "Independents" of the party, he had received the nomination. The pastor knew that his friend had been requested by his admirers in the village to allow his name to be used at this convention, but he knew that the captain never had supposed that there was any likelihood that they would use it. The nomination, which, in a district such as theirs, was equivalent to an election, would be a genuine surprise, he felt, to everybody.

"I must go to the Beauforts, right away," he thought, "and fetch him home. In a couple of hours, the whole town will be here to serenade him."

Meantime the captain, sitting with the sisters at the Beaufort supper-table, had received a note, from a friend who happened to be informed of where he was, conveying to him the same intelligence. It had begun already to circulate, like wildfire, through the village.

"Miss Bessie," said he, as the family rose from the table, "isn't it a good time now for you to show that flower to me in the green-house, the one that you were talking to me about, you know?" Then, when the two were out of the others' hearing, "I've got some news," he said; "I want to tell you of it," and he placed the note that had been sent him in her hands.

He had, long since, ceased to apprehend that he had much to fear from Mr. Gaspack. When, several weeks before this, he had told her Johnny's story of the bottle

—the story that the boy upon his deathbed had been so anxious to have him tell to everybody—she had simply answered: "Mr. Gaspack wasn't to blame for having the bottle, then, only for having the bottle render him ridiculous."

The remark had not meant much, perhaps, not half as much as the captain would have liked to have it mean. To tell the truth, like most of my readers, probably, who have drawn their views of life from novels rather than from Nature, he had not been altogether pleased to think that Mr. Gaspack, after all—so far as had been proved—was not a hypocrite nor a scoundrel —only a very pretentious, self-conceited, inconsiderate blunderer. But it was something, nevertheless, to have him seem ridiculous; and, after a time, as he himself had grown more intimate with Miss Bessie, and had ventured to discuss with her the reformer's methods, he had come to be convinced that, if she had ever been engaged to him, the engagement could not still be binding. When now she had finished reading the note that he had handed her, the flush and look of pride that came upon her face as she returned it seemed to him the sweetest sight that he had ever seen.

"Do you know to whom I owe it all?" he asked.

"How so?" she said.

"Do you remember how it was that I came to be con-

nected with this temperance movement, and to start the society through which I seem to have gained such influence in the neighborhood? Do you remember how I came to go into the Sunday-school, that indirectly drew me into the temperance movement, and to poor Johnny's bedside, and to doing things for other people that I hadn't any conception that a man like me could do till I had tried them?"

The face at his side was bent down gazing at the floor. Unconsciously he had clasped her hand, and now was pressing it passionately. Had she not understood his words, his actions would have rendered them no longer doubtful.

"You have done so much for me," he went on—"far more than, a year ago, I should have dreamt of anybody's doing: given me influence here—a position in the Church and State. And there's another sphere in life," he added hurriedly, as though he feared that, if he should stop, his courage might forsake him—"another sphere, in which a woman can do more for one than in this, and that is—in the home. What might a home not be, could it have you there as its mistress!"

They walked a little way in silence. Then the girl, who had not yet looked up, knelt down on the pavement of the green-house. They had reached the flower that she had taken him there to see. That flower she plucked,

and a leaf or two, and then she rose and reached up to his button-hole—the one in his coat that lay the nearest to his heart—and placed her gift within it. Then the captain caught her head between his hands, and made her look up toward him; and it was not the hot flush on her cheeks that dried the tears that trembled in her eyes, nor the smile that was breaking there that shook them off, but the first embrace in which she buried her blushing face in the bosom of her heart's true love.

. . . . . .

"I congratulate you, Will!" cried the pastor, as he entered the green-house, hurrying down the pathway with Miss Martha.

"On what?" said the captain, thinking only of his love, and startled by the sudden apparition there of his friend so soon congratulating him.

"Why, on your nomination," said the pastor; and he began to tell the news that he had brought with him.

But there had been already such confusion and such blushing on the part of those to whom he was speaking, that there seemed to be but one way left of righting matters.

"To tell the truth, Dick," said the captain, in his frankest manner, "we supposed you were congratulating us on something better."

Then he looked at his companion, and of course she blushed, and of course Miss Martha had to hide her sister's blush by going up and kissing her. And then the pastor's turn had come to be embarrassed. With a face as pale as death, "Are you engaged?" he asked.

"We are," said the captain; "any objection, Dick?"

And then instinctively the pastor turned and looked at Martha; and, as the captain always said, from the color on her face, as she looked back at him, the worst fool living might have known that there was fruit there ripe and ready to tumble at the first touch into his hands.

"But I thought," said the pastor, stumbling, in his wish to relieve the general embarrassment, into the very best way out of it—"I thought Miss Bessie was—was promised to Mr. Gaspack."

This name and the thoughts conjured by this suggestion could not but recall at once the party from their poetry, and restore them to the realm of prose.

"Poor Mr. Gaspack!" Martha cried; "he hung around here fully two years—"

"Hush! hush!" said Bessie, gently interrupting her, whereat Miss Martha merely made the least suggestion of a pout with her pretty lips and a shrug with her slender shoulders, as much as if to say, "Why, it's all in the family, you know." And while she did so, the pastor, seeing

it, felt his heart begin to beat so wildly that he really could not help recalling how in time past one of the Dickory family of sainted memory had died of heart disease. Of course he did not feel so very bad about it now. The event had happened several years before. The recollection came across his mental vision only like a colder background of the present picture, the warmer hues of which at once burst forth again in full relief as he heard the sweet voice at his side continuing. "He hung around here," Martha said, "for fully two years, and wanted Bessie. Poor, dear mamma, too—she wanted it, you know; but, of course, it couldn't be. And Bessie always would provoke me so with the way she treated him and spoke of him. No wonder everybody took them for engaged."

"But Mr. Gaspack comes here yet," said the pastor, "doesn't he?"

"And Miss Inthway stays here yet," said Martha, with a significant little laugh. "And the captain flirted with her here one night—don't you remember?—and the next time Mr. Gaspack had a chance, he gave his sentiments in Chartville church—don't you remember?—with reference to the unchristian conduct of this captain." And she ended with an imitative tone and gesture, that brought another "Hush! hush!" from her sister.

"Ah!" said the pastor and the captain both together,

with the air of men who have just received a special revelation.

But far away the music of a band and the shouts of men were sounding, and the lights of a hundred torches began to glimmer through the street that led up from the village to the Beaufort mansion. It was evident that the people had discovered where the captain was.

But the man whom they were seeking looked away from the brilliant scene in the distance into the eyes of the woman at his side. "Not there is the light to guide me on," he thought, "but here. Not there, in the music and the shouting, is the sound that, now or at any time, can call my spirit forth to work out with complete success the problem of its life. Nay, nay; but in the sympathizing glance and in the 'still small voice' of her I love—in these I heed, and shall have ever with me too, the presence and the summons of the Power most sovereign over all the best within me."

The captain made his speech. The people cheered him over and over again. He walked back with the pastor to their rooms, and there, through almost all the night, the two men sat up talking.

"Well, well, it's a strange world, isn't it?" said the captain, as at last they rose up, ready to retire just when the morn was breaking.

"A very, very strange world," said the other.

But both were prepared to admit that, in certain circumstances, for men with noble ends in view and kindly ways of reaching them, or willing to be guided toward such ends and ways by voices, hands, and hearts of other souls devoted to this work, the world might also be a very happy one.

THE END.

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